



PHD

Nature and technology in GDR literature

Tomlinson, Dennis Churchill

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NATURE AND TECHNOLOGY IN GDR LITERATURE

NATURE AND TECHNOLOGY IN GDR LITERATURE

submitted by Dennis Churchill Tomlinson

for the degree of PhD

of the University of Bath

1993

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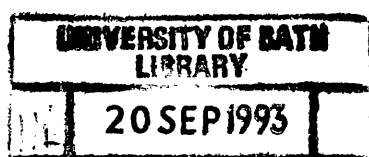
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Summary

This thesis is concerned with the treatment of ecological issues in the literature of the German Democratic Republic. Although environmental criticism in East German literature can be traced back to the mid-1960s, this study concentrates on the most advanced phase, between 1980 and 1989. The detailed literary analyses focus on selected works by a representative group of authors: the prose writers Jurij Koch, Helga Königsdorf and Matthias Körner and the poets Wulf Kirsten, Heinz Czechowski and Richard Pietraß. Comparative analyses of different works are undertaken within the three categories of essayistic prose, narrative prose and poetry.

The introduction to the thesis briefly explains the distinct social role of literature in the GDR and the serious environmental problems there. Chapter 1 surveys changing attitudes towards technology and nature in GDR literature from 1949 to 1989. Chapter 2 examines essays on environmental topics by Koch, Körner, Königsdorf and Pietraß. Chapter 3 compares the literary treatment of environmental issues in three works of prose fiction: Koch's *Der Kirschbaum* (1984), Königsdorf's *Respektloser Umgang* (1986) and Körner's *Die Totenkeule* (1988). Chapter 4 studies poems on similar themes by Kirsten,

Czechowski and Pietraß.

In spite of the uniform Marxist ideology of the SED, GDR writers in the Eighties developed a surprising diversity of standpoints as regards ecological issues. Writers' opinions on the environment also showed a general tendency towards radicalisation and the relaxation of self-censorship in the course of the decade. Before the 1980s, political restrictions had sometimes inhibited authors from publishing narrative or essayistic prose works on the sensitive ecological topic, while poetry had provided an alternative channel. In the Eighties, however, the political constraints on publication were more relaxed than they had previously been. But even so, the authors' environmental criticisms did not receive a fair reception until 1987-89.

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Abbreviations

CERN	European Organisation for Nuclear Research
DBD	Demokratische Bauernpartei Deutschlands
<i>DK</i>	<i>Der Kirschbaum</i> (Jurij Koch)
<i>DT</i>	<i>Die Totenkeule</i> (Matthias Körner)
dtv	Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag
'FesA'	'Fragen eines schreibenden Abgeordneten' (Matthias Körner)
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic
KAP	Kooperative Abteilung Pflanzenproduktion
LPG	Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft
LPG-T	Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft- Tierproduktion
mdv	Mitteldeutscher Verlag
<i>ND</i>	<i>Neues Deutschland</i>
<i>ndl</i>	<i>neue deutsche literatur</i>
<i>RU</i>	<i>Respektloser Umgang</i> (Helga Königsdorf)
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands
<i>SuF</i>	<i>Sinn und Form</i>
<i>WB</i>	<i>Weimarer Beiträge</i>

Introduction

1. Aims, scope and organisation of thesis

This thesis is concerned with the treatment of ecological issues in the literature of the German Democratic Republic, a theme which arose in the course of the 1960s against a background of almost universal confidence in technological progress, and which became quite frequent in the literature of the 1970s and 1980s. Only a moderate quantity of secondary literature has yet been published on this topic. The most important works are perhaps Hubertus Knabe's study 'Zweifel an der Industriegesellschaft: Ökologische Kritik in der erzählenden DDR-Literatur' (1985) and Anita Mallinckrodt's book *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR* (1987), which both deal with prose literature. Wolfgang Ertl and Klaus Schuhmann, among others, have written articles about East German ecological poetry.¹

The basic objective of this research project is to investigate how GDR writers responded to the destruction of the natural environment (often simply termed 'nature' below) by modern technological society. The title *Nature and Technology in GDR Literature* thus refers to the interaction between nature and technology or, to be more

precise, the deleterious impact of technology on nature. A more specific aim is to consider how the ecological topic is treated in prose on the one hand and poetry on the other. I have included a separate chapter on 'essayistic prose', besides those on 'narrative prose' and 'poetry', because although East German authors wrote many essays and speeches on ecological issues, the essayistic approach to the subject has so far been neglected by literary scholars. I shall consider the functions of these three genres and the role of literature as a whole in the broader East German environmental debate. A further question that has arisen in the course of my research is whether a new consciousness, such as the awareness of the seriousness of environmental problems, is best conveyed through new literary forms, or whether older forms and methods of writing are appropriate for this purpose.

Given the sheer quantity of environmentally critical literature (below often termed 'environmental literature') that was written in the GDR, as in the West, in the Seventies and Eighties, it is necessary to restrict the scope of this investigation. I have decided to confine myself to mainstream poetry and prose for adults, disregarding the categories of children's and young people's literature, science fiction, underground literature and drama. The project will focus on selected

works by selected authors: the prose writers Jurij Koch, Helga Königsdorf and Matthias Körner and the poets Wulf Kirsten, Heinz Czechowski and Richard Pietraß (the reasons for this selection will be explained in the introductory sections of the chapters below). While chapter 1 will give a general survey of the earlier industrial and later environmental literature from the foundation of the GDR in 1949 to the revolution against SED rule in 1989, chapters 2, 3 and 4, which are respectively dedicated to essayistic prose, narrative prose and poetry, will concentrate on the most advanced phase of East German environmental literature, between the upsurge in ecological writing around 1980 and the 'Wende' of 1989. GDR literature treats a wide range of environmental and related issues, from which I have selected several important topics for primary consideration:

- destruction of the landscape or natural environment;
- rural changes ('rural literature' is a special focus of this work);
- lignite mining;
- Sorbian culture under threat;
- social damage;
- political, societal and economic causes of ecological damage;
- global ecological crisis;

- nuclear war;
- criticism of 'progress' (I shall try to maintain a distinction between 'progress' in a stereotypical official sense and *progress* in a neutral sense);²
- possible alternatives to the *status quo*;
- ethics and responsibility, seen most distinctly in the field of science.

In section 2 of this introduction I shall briefly outline the socio-political context of GDR environmental literature, in particular the role played by literature in East German society and the serious ecological problems in the GDR. In chapter 1, which has a historical approach, I shall survey changing attitudes towards technology and nature in East German writing from 1949 to 1989, concentrating on the emergence and development of environmental literature. Literature here will be seen in the context of relevant political events and the broader ecological debate. As indicated above, the three following chapters will each be devoted to a different literary genre: essayistic prose in chapter 2, narrative prose in chapter 3 and poetry in chapter 4. In each of these chapters selected works by different authors will be analysed and compared with each other. The internal thematic structure of these three chapters will loosely follow the order of topics given above,

although it is of course not appropriate to treat each topic in detail in each chapter, and the topics overlap considerably. The organising principle in this is a progression from the local to the global and from concrete environmental issues to more abstract questions.

2. Socio-political context of GDR environmental literature

As Anita Mallinckrodt has shown, literature in the GDR was institutionalised within the socio-political system and functioned as a 'conveyer of values', as 'part of the political socialization process which orients citizens to their system'.³ Literature did not, though, simply serve to support the established order: it played a 'challenging' as well as an 'affirming' role.⁴ Several Western scholars have observed that GDR literature pointed out problems and conflicts in society which were out of bounds for other channels of publicity. Hubertus Knabe stated in 1985,

Anders als in der Bundesrepublik ergänzt sie [die Literatur] keine politische Diskussion, sondern muß sie gleichsam ersetzen und übernimmt dabei auch solche Aufgaben, die hierzulande kritische Wissen-

schaftler, Journalisten und Umweltschützer ausüben. Sie thematisiert ein Unbehagen an der Zivilisation, das anderswo in dieser Form nicht zur Sprache gebracht werden kann, und muß häufig auch außerliterarische Aufgaben wahrnehmen, z.B. Informationen vermitteln, weil andere Instanzen dafür nicht zur Verfügung stehen..⁵

Interestingly, Knabe sees a deliberate official policy behind this, for ecological dissent could be more easily kept under control if confined to the literary sphere:

Auf diese Weise wird die ökologische Debatte in der DDR in den vorpolitischen Raum verlegt und damit ein Forum freigehalten, wo gesellschaftliche Beunruhigung kontrollierbar diskutiert werden kann, ohne sich allzusehr verselbständigen zu können. Das wiederum ist kaum vorstellbar ohne eine allgemeine kulturpolitische Strategie, die das Thema für die Literatur einerseits 'freigegeben' hat, andererseits orientierend und einschränkend eingreift.⁶

Literature was, however, not alone in drawing attention to environmental problems. GDR journalists and politicians may have failed in this respect, but in the 1970s and 1980s there were several scientists and church

environmental groups who brought ecological problems to public attention, besides the writers and the West German broadcasters. There was in fact quite a substantial critical discussion of environmental issues in the GDR in the Seventies and Eighties, with literature playing an important part (see chapter 1 below).

While Western books and media undoubtedly contributed to the development of debate, the basic reason for environmental concern in the GDR was the serious extent of environmental pollution and destruction in that country. Perhaps the biggest source of difficulties was East Germany's reliance on lignite or brown coal, a domestically produced fuel, to satisfy more than 60% of its energy needs and also to serve as a source of chemical products. In 1985 as much as 300 million tonnes of lignite was mined. Not only did the extraction of brown coal cause large-scale landscape damage in the regions around Leipzig and Cottbus in the southern GDR, but this fuel, with its relatively high sulphur content, was also a major source of air pollution. The southern industrial zone of the GDR suffered from particularly severe air pollution, for the energy, chemical, metal and other industries were all concentrated there.⁷ The application of industrial principles to agriculture from the early 1970s onward, which led to the increased use of fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides, the consolidation of agricultural land

into huge fields and the extensive draining and irrigation of land, also caused ecological problems, including water pollution and the loss of plant and animal species.⁸ Peter Wensierski's book *Ökologische Probleme und Kritik an der Industriegesellschaft in der DDR heute* (1988) provides a comprehensive survey of East Germany's environmental problems as they stood in the mid-1980s.⁹ I shall, where necessary, provide further details of particular ecological problems in the notes to the following chapters.

Notes to introduction

1. The following are the most pertinent secondary works that I have consulted: Wolfgang Ertl, 'Ökolyrik in der DDR: Eine Beispielreihe', in *Studies in GDR Culture and Society* 5, edited by Margy Gerber (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), pp. 221-35; Ertl, 'Sintflut und Apokalypse: Überlegungen zur Umweltlyrik in der DDR und BRD', in *GDR: Individual and Society*, edited by Ingrid K. J. Williams (Ealing: Ealing College of HE, 1987), pp. 79-90; Axel Goodbody, 'Deutsche Ökolyrik: Comparative Observations on the Emergence and

Expression of Environmental Consciousness in West and East German Poetry', in *German Literature at a Time of Change 1989-1990: German Unity and German Identity in Literary Perspective*, edited by Arthur Williams, Stuart Parkes and Roland Smith (Bern, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Paris, Vienna: P. Lang, 1991), pp. 373-400; Harald Hartung, 'Neuere Naturlyrik in der DDR', in *Naturlyrik und Gesellschaft*, edited by Norbert Mecklenburg (Stuttgart: Klett, 1977), pp. 179-97; Jürgen Haupt, *Natur und Lyrik: Naturbeziehungen im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1983); Hubertus Knabe, 'Zweifel an der Industriegesellschaft: Ökologische Kritik in der erzählenden DDR-Literatur', in *Umweltprobleme und Umweltbewußtsein in der DDR*, edited by Redaktion Deutschland Archiv (Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1985), pp. 201-50; Jürgen Lehmann, 'Das erzählte Dorf: Anmerkungen zur Funktion von "Landleben-Literatur" in der DDR', in *Kontroversen, alte und neue: Akten des VII. Internationalen Germanisten-Kongresses Göttingen 1985*, edited by Karl Pestalozzi et al. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986), vol. X, pp. 97-104; Anita Mallinckrodt, *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR: Literature, Church, Party and Interest Groups in Their Socio-Political Context* (Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of America, 1987); Steffen Peltsch, 'Umwelt in

unserer Literatur', *mitteilungen* (of the Schriftstellerverband der DDR), 1989, no. 5, pp. 4-12; Klaus Schuhmann, 'Lageberichte zur ökologischen Situation - Beobachtungen zur Lyrik der achtziger Jahre', in *DDR-Literatur '85 im Gespräch*, edited by Siegfried Rönisch (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1986), pp. 23-43.

2. See Mallinckrodt, *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR*, pp. 27-30, for a discussion of the Marxist-Leninist concept of progress as a historical and social force and adaptations of this concept in the GDR.
3. Mallinckrodt, *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR*, pp. 14-18, 148-52.
4. Mallinckrodt, *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR*, p. 19.
5. Knabe, 'Zweifel an der Industriegesellschaft', p. 240. Comments to similar effect are made by Eckart Förtsch in 'Literatur als Wissenschaftskritik', in *Lebensbedingungen in der DDR: Siebzehnte Tagung zum Stand der DDR-Forschung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 12. bis 15 Juni 1984* (Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1984), pp. 157-68 (p. 157); and by Wolfgang Emmerich in *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1981), p. 26. The idea that literature

in the GDR was an 'Ersatzöffentlichkeit' has, though, been challenged by some literary scholars on the grounds that literature was a 'public voice' in its own right, not a 'substitute public voice'. See Mallinckrodt, *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR*, pp. 20, 151-52.

6. Knabe, 'Zweifel an der Industriegesellschaft', p. 240. On page 241, Knabe supports his 'Annahme eines offensiven Versuchs, das Umweltthema im Sinne der DDR-Kulturpolitik positiv zu besetzen' by pointing to the limited but noticeable space that publishers and literary journals had granted to ecological criticism in recent years (i.e. pre-1985), and to the frequently positive reactions of reviewers, at least in the specialist journals.
7. See Peter Wensierski, *Ökologische Probleme und Kritik an der Industriegesellschaft in der DDR heute* (Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1988), pp. 10-88 (section 1, 'Schadstoffe in der Luft', which includes data on the energy industry), and 220-33 (section 4, 'Ökologische Probleme des Braunkohleabbaus'); and Cord Schwartau, 'Die Entwicklung der Umwelt in der DDR: Neue Probleme durch Renaissance der Braunkohle', in *Umweltprobleme und Umweltbewußtsein in der DDR*, pp. 9-38.
8. See Karl Eckart, 'Changes in the Structure of GDR Agriculture in the Last Ten Years', in *Studies in*

GDR Culture and Society 5, edited by Margy Gerber (Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of America, 1985), pp. 15-25; Wensierski, *Ökologische Probleme*, pp. 154-219 (section 3, 'Ökologische Probleme der industrialisierten Landwirtschaft'); and Andreas Kurjo, 'Landwirtschaft und Umwelt in der DDR: Ökologische, rechtliche und institutionelle Aspekte der sozialistischen Agrarpolitik', in *Umweltprobleme und Umweltbewußtsein in der DDR*, pp. 39-78.

9. See note 7 above for details of publication.

Chapter 1 - Development of environmental literature and environmental debate in the GDR

1. Introduction

Literature critical of the effects of technological progress on people and the environment began to appear in the GDR as early as the first half of the 1960s, a time of general faith in technology. This chapter will trace the emergence of ecologically critical literature from a background of optimistic, pro-technological writing and follow its development through to the Eighties. Differences in the development of essayistic prose, narrative prose and poetry will be examined, and literature will be seen in the context of the contemporary socio-political situation and specifically as part of a debate about society's values.

The development of the literature concerned with technology, progress and ecology between 1949 and 1989 can for the sake of convenience be divided into five periods, each period being marked by some substantial and distinct changes in that literature. Important changes in SED cultural policy can usefully serve as boundary markers between the periods, for writing in this politically controversial field was frequently influenced

by the degree of artistic freedom allowed to writers. Within each section devoted to a certain period I shall in turn outline: *firstly*, the socio-political context of literature, and the progress/ecology debate, including writers' public statements and essays; *secondly*, developments in narrative prose; and *thirdly*, developments in poetry.

2. 1949 (foundation of the GDR) to 1965 (Eleventh Plenum of the Central Committee): commitment to 'progress'

The first decade and a half of the GDR's existence saw the collectivisation of most agricultural land, the nationalisation of most of industry and the forced development especially of basic industries, which were concentrated in the southern districts of the GDR.¹ The authorities, holding the Marxist faith in man's ability to control his environment, espoused an optimistic belief in social progress and in science, technology and production as the means of achieving this.² Literature often served as a channel to promote these ideas: Christa Wolf's essay 'Literatur und Zeitgenossenschaft' (1959) states the need for literature to do justice to the scientific age, which, as the essay itself shows, in

practice means praise for socialist technological progress as exemplified by Soviet sputniks.³ The liberalisation of cultural policy in the first half of the 1960s did, though, allow environmental problems and other drawbacks of industrialisation to be depicted in narrative prose within an optimistic framework.

The promotion of socialist values, including the beneficial character of industrialisation, was the central concern of the 'Aufbauromane' of the 1950s. Hans Marchwitza's monumental novel *Roheisen* (1955), for example, portrays the construction of the vast Eisenhüttenstadt ironworks complex in the early Fifties in a wholly idealised light.⁴ It is a regrettable necessity that the old, rural landscape has to be sacrificed for the sake of progress, but in its place a new, harmonious landscape of woods, rivers, fields and factories is created, where it is the human presence that gives nature its value:

Die Landschaft hatte ein neues Gepräge erhalten. Ein Antlitz der Kraft und eines unerschütterlichen Willens. Eine mächtige, beharrliche Meisterhand hatte es geschaffen aus Bergen von Eisen und Ziegelsteinen, mit Sorgen und zahllosen Schweiß-tropfen. Der Meister hieß Arbeiterklasse. (p. 531)

There is a clear parallel between the aesthetic harmony of the new landscape and the social harmony of the new community that has been built up out of different social groups. Readers, reviewers and even the Minister of Culture himself, Johannes R. Becher, criticised *Roheisen* for its merely schematic representation of conflicts and for its stylistic faults, but the advantageousness of industrialisation itself of course remained unquestioned by these critics.⁵

The writing which flowed from the Bitterfeld Conference of 1959 maintained an optimistic attitude towards industry, technology and science, but the portrayal of GDR society, including the central subject of industrial life, was now more authentic than it had been in the 'Aufbauroman'. The representation of society's deficiencies in some early Bitterfeld prose was allowed to develop further by the freer cultural policy introduced in 1963.⁶ Such problems of GDR industrial society as pollution, primitive working conditions and disaffection among workers were addressed with considerable frankness in the novels *Spur der Steine* by Erik Neutsch (1964), *Der geteilte Himmel* by Christa Wolf (1963) and *Rummelplatz* by Werner Bräunig (published in extract in 1964-65).⁷ In *Der geteilte Himmel* industrial work is treated positively as broadening the central character's horizons, and the unlimited possibilities of

technological progress under socialism are symbolised by Gagarin's pioneering spaceflight, but the serious pollution problems in the industrial city of Halle are not evaded:

Jedes Kind konnte hier die Richtung des Windes nach dem vorherrschenden Geruch bestimmen: Chemie oder Malzkaffee oder Braunkohle. Über allem diese Dunstglocke, Industrieabgase, die sich schwer atmen. Die Himmelsrichtungen bestimmte man hier nach den Schornsteinsilhouetten der großen Chemiebetriebe, die wie Festungen im Vorfeld der Stadt lagen. (p. 27)⁸

The critical and official reception of Wolf's book was largely positive, accepting that problems in society were suitable material for literature.⁹ Harsher treatment, though, was meted out to *Rummelplatz*, Bräunig's novel about uranium miners in the Erzgebirge,¹⁰ and *Ole Bienkopp*, Erwin Strittmatter's rural novel of 1963,¹¹ which were both franker than *Der geteilte Himmel* in their depiction of social, including environmental, inadequacies. *Ole Bienkopp* is a novel strongly supportive of social and technological progress in the country: the eponymous hero founds a collective farm long before the official start of collectivisation in 1958 and is full of ideas for productively intervening in nature.

The frequent failure of Bienkopp's schemes and those of the leading local bureaucrats does, though, demonstrate the need to work sensitively with nature rather than attempting to dominate it.

In much of the poetry of the late 1940s to early 1960s, as in prose like *Roheisen*, nature is depicted as a landscape shaped or transformed by human beings.¹² Johannes R. Becher's 'Lied der neuen Erde' (1948), celebrating the 'liberation' of Eastern German peasants from their landowning masters in the post-war land reform,¹³ extols the peasants' transformation and utilisation of the earth with modern technology:

Es wurde auch die Erde umgeboren,
Als über sie, befreit vom Herrentum,
Hinzogen die Kolonnen der Traktoren
Und pflügten den uralten Boden um.¹⁴

More strongly than in Marchwitza's novel, the beauty of the 'liberated' earth ('Da glänzte auch die Erde feierlich') symbolises the social harmony of the 'liberated' people. Domination of nature by man is, though, the exception in East German poems of this period. The man-nature relationship is usually depicted in a gentler light, with man and nature communicating

freely with one another and making each other productive, as in Bertolt Brecht's poems 'Der Blumengarten' and 'Der Rauch' (1953)¹⁵ and Georg Maurer's 'Stunde im April' (written 1964), which commences, 'Statt Scheibenglas Aprilwind! Kommunikation/ zwischen der Sonne und dem Kinderlachen'.¹⁶ Poets did, indeed, sometimes look at the touched and altered landscape through rose-coloured spectacles. Commenting on Maurer's 'Dreistrophenkalendar' (written 1950-51), a cycle of short nature poems about the Rosental park in Leipzig,¹⁷ Heinz Czechowski has written:

Gewissermaßen 'positiv verfremdet' schimmert durch die Folie der Großstadtlandschaft der Ursprung der Dinge hervor. Die Natur scheint ungetrübt wie das Wasser der Bäche, das in diesen Gedichten rauscht. Nichts in verbaler Deutlichkeit davon, daß die konkreten Gewässer phenolhaltige Abwassergräben sind, wie sie das Rosental durchziehen.¹⁸

While the problem of pollution was already being acknowledged in some novels of the first half of the Sixties, e.g. *Der geteilte Himmel* and *Spur der Steine*, it was still being omitted from the idealised description of nature in many contemporary poems, e.g. Maurer's 'Stunde im April' and his sub-cycle 'Vogel und Wald' (written 1962-63).¹⁹ Axel Goodbody suggests that this discrepancy

between the genres may have been due to official expectations of harmony from nature poetry, with pollution and ecological disturbance being regarded merely as isolated and temporary phenomena.²⁰

However, in poems of the Fifties and the first half of the Sixties nature was not always portrayed as beautiful or as enjoying a communicative, productive relationship with man. Probably reflecting disillusionment with society, 'Das Zeichen' and other poems from Peter Huchel's volume *Chausseen, Chausseen* (1963) present a dark, threatening landscape with which it is difficult to communicate.²¹ In several poems protesting against atomic tests and warfare, nuclear weapons are shown to cause terrible disruption in ecological processes: Stephan Hermlin's 'Die Vögel und der Test' (1957), for example, describes how migratory birds were forced to change their routes by hydrogen bomb tests.²² Other poems from the early 1960s already warn of a broader threat to human survival posed by technology: Günter Kunert's 'Laika' (1963) uses the death of the first dog sent into space as a metaphor for the possible death of mankind,²³ and Rainer Kirsch's 'Gespräch mit dem Saurier' (1965), though it ends optimistically, points out the danger that lies in 'Erfindungen, Technik, Verbrauch,/ Atomstrahlung, Mutationen...'²⁴

3. 1965 (Eleventh Plenum of the Central Committee) to 1971 (appointment of Honecker as First Secretary): the ambivalence of 'progress' recognised

It seemed in 1963-64 that GDR writers, such as Christa Wolf in *Der geteilte Himmel* and Erwin Strittmatter in *Ole Bienkopp*, could with a degree of freedom depict their society's difficulties on its way to a better future, though such works would inevitably attract criticism. However, in the course of the year 1965 the SED leadership began to reintroduce a more restrictive cultural policy. This trend reached its culmination at the Eleventh Plenum of the SED Central Committee in December 1965, when several political leaders roundly attacked disloyal artists. Erich Honecker, speaking in the name of the Politburo, accused some film-makers and writers of viewing contemporary GDR reality 'nur als schweres, opferreiches Durchgangsstadium zu einer illusionären schönen Zukunft'.²⁵ Thereafter it became much more difficult, at least for prose writers, to deal honestly with the state of the environment and other social problems in the GDR.

The East German authorities had always propagated the idea of technological progress, and during the 'scientifically founded' economic reforms of 1963-71 they firmly identified the contemporary 'wissenschaftlich-

technische Revolution', exemplified by recent advances in cybernetics, electronics etc., as a means of solving outstanding economic and social problems.²⁶ The arts, a political instrument once more, were officially expected to create a popular consciousness conducive to the technological revolution,²⁷ and many prose and verse works of the time do indeed express great optimism about technological progress, as will be seen below. In the essayistic field, Christa Wolf's 'Ein Besuch' (1969), a report on a visit to a genetic research institute, shows science to be a force for good under the right, *socialist*, conditions, although the possibility of abuse under capitalism is raised.²⁸

The 'scientific-technological revolution' was, though, already prompting critical reflection in the second half of the 1960s. As we shall see below, several poets voiced heterodox opinions on this issue in the poetry debate of 1966 in the FDJ magazine *Forum*, and a few ecologically critical prose and verse works already appeared in the GDR in the succeeding years. This reassessment by writers of the value of technological progress formed part of their broader critical reflection on socialist society in the dispiriting aftermath of the Eleventh Plenum.²⁹ Even the SED was beginning to recognise the harmful effects of industry, inasmuch as serious water and air pollution and pressure on the

limited reserves of agricultural land and water were creating an *economic* need for the conservation of natural resources. This realisation led to the GDR's first comprehensive environmental legislation, the 'Landeskultugesetz' of 1970.³⁰

After the Eleventh Plenum, prose literature partly retreated to a conformist position. Although Erik Neutsch and Werner Bräunig had previously depicted difficult social conflicts and defects in *Spur der Steine* and *Rummelplatz*, the new stories in Bräunig's volume *Gewöhnliche Leute* (1969) and Neutsch's *Die anderen und ich* (1970) showed present social problems and conflicts as being fairly simple to resolve, often by technological means.³¹ In Bräunig's title story 'Gewöhnliche Leute', for instance,³² the hero, a construction supervisor, succeeds in getting a modern block of flats built which will replace wretched old housing in the town. The heroine's research into building materials holds out the prospect of further improvements in living conditions. In this idealised world, the countryside serves as an idyllic refuge from the cares of urban life.

A few prose works questioning the beneficiality of scientific-technological progress were already written in the late Ulbricht period, but little was published until Honecker assumed power in 1971. Christa Wolf's short scientific satire 'Neue Lebensansichten eines Katers'

(discussed further in section 4 below) was written in 1970 but not published until 1974.³³ Brigitte Reimann's novel *Franziska Linkerhand*, which contains some graphic impressions of a heavily polluted and architecturally soulless new town, was largely written in the 1960s but was only published, incomplete, in 1974.³⁴ While Wolf's novel *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (1968) indirectly criticises a society which makes people into its instruments,³⁵ the only prose writers to have explicit doubts about progress and ecology published in this period seem to have been Joachim Nowotny (*Der Riese im Paradies*, 1969),³⁶ Hanns Cibulka (*Sanddornzeit*, 1970)³⁷ and Erwin Strittmatter (the short prose of 1966-72).³⁸

In these texts Strittmatter takes a more cautious attitude towards 'progress' than he did in *Ole Bienkopp*. Human inventiveness, as manifested for instance in the 'fairy tale' of nuclear power ('Grüne Lauben', 1971),³⁹ is greatly admired by Strittmatter, but he warns that technology is ambivalent in its effects and that man must treat nature with respect when attempting to intervene in it. In the 'little story' 'Frühling aus Menschenhand' (1971) Strittmatter writes:

Der Mensch ist das einzige Lebewesen, das sich nicht mit dem, was es auf seinem Planeten vorfindet, zufriedengibt.[...] Seit einiger Zeit sind seine

Forscherbrigaden auf den Beinen und entwerfen Projekte, die warmen Meeresströmungen umzuleiten, um den Lenzbeginn verlässlicher und die Frühlinge womöglich länger zu machen. Aber er muß vorsichtig dabei zu Werke gehen, denn wo ein Plus ist, ist auch ein Minus.⁴⁰

Strittmatter's short story 'Kraftstrom' (1969) points out the dehumanising effects of technological change on people.⁴¹ Here an old countryman finds himself robbed of work and his life deprived of meaning by the arrival of electricity in his village, though he does eventually find a new job looking after the cattle pastures with their electrified fences. This is perhaps the first of the series of critical East German village stories, continuing into the 1980s, which depict the alienation of country people, especially the old, in the wake of social changes and the industrialisation of agriculture.⁴²

While very little criticism of 'progress' could be published in prose in 1965-71, the less widely read genre of poetry seems to have provided an alternative channel. Poets' doubts about technological progress achieved important but rare publicity in the *Forum* poetry debate of 1966, when the editors of the youth magazine asked several poets whether the new position of man in socialist society, as brought about especially by the

technological revolution, led to changes in the content and structure of poetry. While Karl Mickel, Sarah Kirsch and Rainer Kirsch rejected such a direct influence of technology on art,⁴³ Günter Kunert, more radically, attacked technological progress itself for its inhumane potential:

Mir erscheint als bedeutendste 'technische Revolution' (nicht ganz im Sinn Ihrer Frage) die Massenvernichtung von Menschen, das möglich gewordene Ende allen Lebens. Am Anfang des technischen Zeitalters steht Auschwitz, steht Hiroshima, die ich nur in bezug auf gesellschaftlich organisiert verwendete Technik hier in einem Atemzug nenne. Ich glaube, nur noch große Naivität setzt Technik mit gesellschaftlich-humanitärem Fortschreiten gleich.⁴⁴

As might have been expected, the dissenting poets met with heavy criticism from the editors of the magazine and the establishment literary scholar Hans Koch.⁴⁵

The prevailing attitude towards technological progress among the younger poets (the generation of Mickel and Sarah and Rainer Kirsch) was, all the same, largely positive and often enthusiastic. The Promethean attitude, according to which man must advance himself by

his own (technological) efforts, is at its most pronounced and enthusiastic in poems by Volker Braun like 'Messe' and 'Das weite Feld' (1970).⁴⁶ Eschewing the largely harmonious man-nature relationship of older poets like Becher and Maurer, Braun concludes 'Das weite Feld' with an endorsement of the vigorous transformation of the rural landscape:

Und unterpflügen die Raine! aufbrechen
Das Blickfeld! den Finger legen
Auf das Land!

The Promethean attitude is also present, for example, in Wulf Kirsten's 'feldzug' (written 1965), a poem in praise of crop-spraying, and in Heinz Czechowski's 'Ode auf eine Motorradfahrt' (1968), which uses rapid, modern transport as a symbol of progress.⁴⁷

Although some poets at this time were presenting idyllic, escapist images of nature,⁴⁸ others were prepared to face up to the shabbiness of contemporary landscapes (and social reality) while maintaining an optimistic view of future development: thus Braun depicts a polluted industrial landscape in 'Das Vogtland' (1970) and Czechowski describes the rubbish-infested edge of a city in 'Peripherie' (1968).⁴⁹ In 'Die Struga' (written 1966) the Sorbian poet Kito Lorenc laments the despoliation of the Lausitz landscape of his childhood by

the intensive exploitation of lignite, which has necessitated the pollution and rerouting of the river Struga:

[...] die Struga, da
fließt sie, ein Abwasser, trüb.
Blind brennt uns die Augen Spülicht
der Kohlenwäsche. Das neue Bett - klaffend.
[...] Struga, wässernde Strieme
im räudigen Fell der Landschaft,
[...]⁵⁰

At this time Lorenc can, though, still see a sign of hope for the future in 'die Pappeln [...], die wir sorgsam pflanzen/ am neuen Bett der Struga - in eine Zeit, fern' ('Versuch über uns', written 1967).⁵¹

Lorenc's and Czechowski's poems of this period contain a good deal of reflection on the ambivalence of progress, which brings both gains and losses (in Strittmatter's terms, 'pluses' and 'minuses').⁵² Czechowski's 'Reisen' captures this ambivalence in a simple transposition of letters:

Die Wolke. Der Regen. Die Fruchtbarkeit.
Die fruchtbare Wissenschaft.
Die Wolke. Der Regen. Die Furchtbarkeit.

Die furchtbare Wissenschaft.

Die Natur unterm Grauen der Mutationen.⁵³

4. 1971 (appointment of Honecker as First Secretary) to
1976 (Biermann crisis): 'progress' challenged

When Erich Honecker took over from Walter Ulbricht as First Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED in 1971, he initiated a substantial liberalisation of cultural and intellectual life after the repression of the preceding years. At a Central Committee meeting in December 1971 Honecker affirmed the legitimacy of the critical role of artists, within ideological limits:

Wenn man von der festen Position des Sozialismus ausgeht, kann es meines Erachtens auf dem Gebiet von Kunst und Literatur keine Tabus geben. Das betrifft sowohl die Fragen der inhaltlichen Gestaltung als auch des Stils [...] ⁵⁴

The socially critical literary works published in the GDR over the next few years included many on environmental themes. These contributed to the incipient ecological debate.

Apparently in response to public pressure, the new government started to speak of the need for environmental protection,⁵⁵ and it was more active in taking environmental measures than its predecessor: for example, a Ministry of Environmental Protection and Water Supply was established in 1971.⁵⁶ However, the industrialisation of agriculture, which the new government pursued with determination in the first half of the 1970s, led to new ecological problems.⁵⁷

A major stimulus to the development of a serious environmental debate was provided by the Club of Rome report of 1972, *The Limits to Growth*, which predicted disaster if economic growth continued, and advocated 'zero growth' instead.⁵⁸ While this Western report was officially rejected in the GDR as an attempt to stabilise capitalism, dissident intellectuals like Jürgen Kuczynski and Wolfgang Harich were more receptive to its arguments, seeing their relevance to the socialist system also.⁵⁹ Indeed, the early and mid-Seventies saw a lively exchange of different ideas about progress and ecology in specialist, public and unofficial fora, including learned journals, social science conferences, literary meetings and the Protestant Church.⁶⁰

Several writers contributed public statements to the new environmental dialogue. At the Seventh Writer's Congress in 1973 Franz Fühmann and Erich Arendt pointed out that man was a natural as well as a social being.⁶¹

Erwin Strittmatter criticised the 'urbanist and pseudo-progressive' mistreatment of nature in a *neue deutsche literatur* interview of 1973.⁶² At a GDR-Soviet writers' colloquium in the same year the Sorbian prose writer Jurij Brezan drew attention to modern people's changed, impoverished relationship with nature and with each other. Brezan saw 'die Autoschlangen in unseren Sommerwäldern' and the 'gierig aufgegriffene Lyrik, die entfernt an Gartenlaube-Lyrik erinnert' as attempts to reestablish lost relationships: 'Steht hinter allem nicht eine Ahnung, der Mensch säge mit seiner Ausbeutung der Natur an dem Ast, auf dem er selbst sitzt?'⁶³

The cultural liberalisation of 1971 brought a flowering of broadly 'environmental' prose, including both new works and some which had previously remained unpublished. Ulrich Plenzdorf, for example, brought out of the 'drawer' his *Erzählung* and stage play *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* (1972-73), which condemned the heavy pressures put on (young) individuals in a conformist, productivity-orientated society and which stirred up wide public discussion of these topics.⁶⁴

The inhumane consequences of untrammelled rationalism were illustrated in Christa Wolf's 'Neue Lebensansichten eines Katers' and 'Selbstversuch' (1974), satirical science fiction stories which marked a

substantial shift away from the pro-scientific attitude of 'Ein Besuch'.⁶⁵ In 'Neue Lebensansichten', a cynical descendant of E.T.A. Hoffmann's Kater Murr reports on two scientists' attempts to develop a cybernetic system for the optimal regulation of human life. SYMAGE (SYSTEM DER MAXIMALEN KÖRPERLICHEN UND SEELISCHEN GESUNDHEIT) satirises the 'scientific' methods of managing society which were officially favoured in the GDR in the late Ulbricht period. East German critics, though, refused to acknowledge the story's relevance to the GDR.⁶⁶ 'Selbstversuch', relating the experiences of a woman scientist who undergoes a sex change experiment, adds a feminist dimension to the critique of science by tracing the cold rationalism of male scientists back to society's rigidly defined gender roles.

The gap between the great power of science and technology and the weak moral restraints on their abuse was pointed out in comments and anecdotes by Erwin Strittmatter (*Die blaue Nachtigall*, 1972) and Günter Kunert (*Tagträume in Berlin und andernorts*, published in the Federal Republic, 1972).⁶⁷ This is also the central theme in Juriy Brezan's novel *Krabat oder Die Verwandlung der Welt* (1976), which blends science fiction with counterbalancing motifs from myth and Sorbian folklore.⁶⁸ The hero, an idealistic scientist called Jan Serbin, wants to ennoble human nature through genetic engineering, but he finds himself pursued by powerful

people from both West and East who see the manipulative potential of his discoveries. Serbin comes to the painful conclusion that 'Unsere Wissenschaft ist aus dem Leben weggelaufen. Nicht mit ihr kann sich die Menschheit retten' (p. 522). The one-sided, rational and material orientation of industrial society is criticised in the parable of the good king who had an industry built up in order to make his subjects prosperous and comfortable - the unforeseen price, though, being pollution and spiritual impoverishment (pp. 207-10).⁶⁹ The critics, although favourable in their assessment of *Krabat*, usually neglected Brezan's criticism of 'progress' or reinterpreted it in an official Marxist sense.⁷⁰

Krabat deals, furthermore, with the value of nature and the harmful effects of 'progress' on the countryside, themes which were now being taken up by several authors, including Axel Schulze in the stories of *Das Gastmahl Balthasars* (1973)⁷¹ and Gerhard Holtz-Baumert in the children's stories of *Der Wunderpilz* (1974).⁷² In Brezan's *Krabat*, the stream running through Serbin's home village in the Lausitz has been rerouted into underground pipes for the sake of agricultural 'utility' (pp. 339-40), and his old parents face eviction from the ancestral family home for similar reasons (pp. 346-61). However, this village is still depicted as an oasis of

tranquillity in the modern world, a motif common in East German rural literature of the Seventies and Eighties.⁷³ Another Sorbian author, Jurij Koch, came forward at this time with the *Erzählung* 'Landvermesser' (1975), in which an old Sorbian rustic couple and their grown-up son have to leave their home to make way for lignite mining.⁷⁴ Whereas the conflicts in *Krabat* are never finally resolved, Koch (simplistically) attempts to reconcile the old and the new lifestyles: the son marries one of the intruding surveyors and his traditional loom, rescued from the old house just before its demolition, finds a place in the couple's new flat:

Dann trugen sie den Webstuhl hinaus, angestrengt, hustend, rettend ein Stück klappernder Schönheit, für den nützlichen Gebrauch inmitten von Beton und Balkon. (p. 55)

With the burgeoning of environmental prose after 1971, narrative prose now caught up with poetry in the trenchancy of its criticism of 'progress'. The poets, meanwhile, simply developed further the critical trend which had already been established in the Sixties. It is true that some poems of this period, like Braun's 'Landwüst' and 'Durchgearbeitete Landschaft' (both 1974), still extolled man's transformation of the landscape and expressed great optimism about the future,⁷⁵ but the

achievements of progress were generally judged very soberly by poets, and even the old, optimistic view of future development was now clouded by doubts. Axel Schulze's 'Landnahme' (1973) depicts a landscape dirtied and disfigured by the development of industry, and although the poet fully appreciates the labour that has been put into this and the genuine progress that has been achieved, conditions in future look little better than those in the recent past:

zurück ließen wir eine Landschaft,
von Menschen geändert, und trieben das
Land vorwärts, mit Füßen und Händen,
mit jeder Faser unseres Leibes,
wir
sahn uns nicht um, wie dem Orkus
Entronnene, weiter, und vor uns, rauchig
noch immer, und voll schmutziger Flüsse,
dehnt sich und wartet: das Land.⁷⁶

And where Czechowski had once sung an 'Ode auf eine Motorradfahrt', he now portrayed motorcycling, that symbol of progress, as an aimless and hazardous sport ('Motorradfahren', 1974).⁷⁷

In poetry, as in prose, there was a continuing tendency to turn to nature and the country as a refuge

from dehumanising urban existence.⁷⁸ Günter Kunert's poem 'An meine Leser' (1974) recommends to the reader, 'Gedichten sich anvertrauen/ und sie anvertrauen/ dem Wind' so that the poems will be carried 'zu den gnädigen Orten der Abwesenheit/ von Zahnstangenlenkung und Stechuhr'.⁷⁹ Poetry, again like prose, also expressed concern about the natural and social losses caused by 'progress' in the countryside. Kirsten's 'dorf' (written 1974) demonstrates through cumulative examples how the appearance of a village has been spoiled, the landscape has been degraded, species have disappeared and, above all, a way of life has been brought to an end. The poem includes the lines:

das lied der beerenpflückerinnen
ein erinnerungsfetzen
im schrumpfwald.
kahlschlaggesellschaften
in aufsteigender linie.
unentwegt fluß-lebensläufe begradigt.⁸⁰

(See chapter 4, section 4 for a detailed analysis of 'dorf'.)

While both prose and poetry paid much attention to the human cost of scientific and technological progress, poetry was perhaps more sensitive than prose to the natural cost: ecological problems and man's greatly

enhanced destructive power over nature (which rebound on man himself). Karl Mickel's poem 'Mottek sagt' (1975) documents, *inter alia*, large-scale ecological damage with harmful consequences for humans.⁸¹ In view of scientific experimentation on microbes ('Akademien,/ wo die Bakterien den Sandkasten ersetzen') and atomic tests ('Künstliche Sonnen explodieren/ über der Haut unserer Erde'), Hanns Cibulka concludes in the poem 'Losgesprochen' (1973) that man has entered a new historical epoch, acquiring new capabilities but also a corresponding responsibility to make the right moral choice:

Losgesprochen
hat dich die Natur,
[...]
du bist mündig geworden,
du kannst dein eigenes Bild
in der Asche zertreten,
im Staub der Erde
den Rosenstock pflanzen.⁸²

Ominous signs of ecological damage on a local scale are observed by Czechowski in 'Flußfahrt' (1974) and by Kirsten in 'der bleibaum' (written 1975).⁸³ In 'Flußfahrt', the poet calls upon the Elbe landscape to

speak the truth about itself and to cover up nothing 'Mit postkartenreifen Idyllen'. The 'unwritten' truth includes not only the historical violence of the Second World War, but also the present contamination of plants by poisonous car exhaust fumes.

5. 1976 (Biermann crisis) to 1979 (revival of literary debate): the fading of belief in progress

By January 1976, environmental topics had achieved sufficient importance in GDR literature to merit substantial and serious attention in a *Weimarer Beiträge* essay entitled 'Das Verhältnis Mensch-Natur in der Selbstverständigung von Schriftstellern der DDR'.⁸⁴ However, the protest of many leading writers against the expatriation of Wolf Biermann in November 1976 provoked the authorities into once more adopting a restrictive cultural policy, which also suppressed environmentally critical literature.⁸⁵ The stage version of Jurij Koch's story 'Landvermesser' received its first performance in Halle at the beginning of 1977 but was soon dropped from the programme, in Koch's words, 'weil einer neuen Leitung das theatralische Vorzeigen gesellschaftlicher Widersprüche nicht als Quelle der Bewegung erscheinen wollte'.⁸⁶ The previous theatre director had been

dismissed for framing a resolution against the expatriation of Biermann.⁸⁷

The repressive measures taken against critical writers and intellectuals after 1976 led them to question still further the hopes of social progress they had once placed in the socialist system of the GDR. Over the long term, from the late 1960s onwards, there was growing disillusionment with the idea of historical progress and even (as formulated by Wolfgang Emmerich) with the Enlightenment as the historical source of modern rationalism.⁸⁸ Critical assessments of the history of Western civilisation were given in Christa Wolf's prose text *Kein Ort. Nirgends* (1979), and Heiner Müller's plays *Leben Gundlings* *Friedrich von Preußen* *Lessings Schlaf* *Traum Schrei* and *Hamletmaschine* (both written 1977).⁸⁹

The public environmental dialogue, meanwhile, was flourishing more strongly than before in church circles, and it seems, indeed, that by 1980 a small but significant segment of public opinion, especially among the young, had come to question the established attitude towards industrial progress and favour environmental protection. Certainly, the SED now saw a need to publicise the achievements and potential of socialism in the field of environmental protection, e.g. in Horst Paucke and Adolf Bauer's book *Umweltprobleme - Herausforderung der Menschheit* (1979).⁹⁰

Maybe encouraged by the changing public mood, some writers returned to the public environmental discussion in 1979. These statements can usefully be taken as marking the beginning of a new, intensive phase of the literary debate, lasting until 1989 (see section 6 below). In interviews in 1979 Jurij Brezan and Gerhard Holtz-Baumert, like Strittmatter and Brezan himself in the early 1970s, uttered sharp warnings about the importance of nature for man and the danger arising from its exploitation.⁹¹ More contentiously, Günter Kunert in the same year intimated that environmental destruction was equally severe in East and West when he referred to 'die moderne Industriegesellschaft und ihre verheerenden Folgen, die sich damals symmetrisch abzuzeichnen begann' [namely in 1957 or 1958].⁹² The little word 'symmetrisch' sparked off an increasingly acrimonious public exchange of letters between Kunert and the editors of *Sinn und Form*, who objected to its implications.⁹³ But although there was hardly any agreement between Kunert and Wilhelm Girnus, the editor-in-chief of *Sinn und Form*, Kunert did here force a detailed public discussion of politically delicate issues: the environmental 'symmetry' of East and West, the suppression of ecological information in the East, and specific environmental problems such as the use of toxic chemical pesticides in modern agriculture. Brezan too made some provocative statements in the interview

mentioned above. He had intended *Krabat*, his novel of 1976, to be an 'öffentliches Diskussionsangebot der These von der Diskrepanz menschlichen Wissens und moralischer Reife', but the expected dialogue did not take off. So in order to stir up discussion about the ethics of science and technology,⁹⁴ Brezan declared,

Die genetischen Forschungen, die uns über kurz oder lang in die Lage versetzen werden, in das Wesen der Menschen überhaupt einzugreifen, zählen zu den schrecklicheren Dingen. [...] Hier könnte die Wissenschaft ein anderes, ein unblutiges Ende der Menschheit vorbereiten: das Ende des Menschen, wie wir den Menschen sehen. Ich jedenfalls habe Angst vor den Biologen, und ich fürchte, wir alle müssen Angst haben.⁹⁵

This time Brezan's criticism of science did provoke a response, as we shall see below in section 6.

The years after 1976 saw, on the face of it, a decline in 'environmental' prose. Science, which had previously been subjected to sharp criticism, was now being presented in a more positive light once again. Rainer Kirsch's prose portrait of 'Der Verhaltensforscher Professor Tembrock' (1978) - if one may include it here -

gives an almost ideal representation of a humane, cultivated scientist, just as Christa Wolf's reportage 'Ein Besuch' (1969) had once done.⁹⁶ Dieter Noll's *Kippenberg* (1979), a novel set in the world of biological research, does expose many faults of scientists and has one character criticise them as 'eine neue Hohepriesterschaft',⁹⁷ but science is portrayed overall as a beneficial enterprise and the scientist hero, if not wholly 'positive', is certainly an admirable man.

The 'environmental' prose that was published in this period was dominated by children's stories giving didactic examples of nature conservation; e.g. in Wolf Spillner's *Gänse überm Reiherberg* (1977) a group of scientists persuade the people living in a newly created nature reserve of the need to protect the endangered greylag geese there.⁹⁸ Edith Anderson's children's book *Der Klappwald* (1978) is exceptional in presenting a dystopian vision of life in a horrific, totally polluted city of the future.⁹⁹

Very few prose works for the adult reader were published about environmental questions. Monika Maron's novel *Flugasche*, which is highly critical of the conformist pressures and journalistic censorship in East German society as well as of the seriously polluting industries in the southern GDR, was not allowed to be published in the GDR in 1979 and eventually appeared in West Germany alone in 1981.¹⁰⁰ The only significant

environmental prose works for adults to appear in this period were Claus B. Schröder's *In meines Großvaters Kinderwald* (1978), a report on a huge pig-breeding plant in Mecklenburg which reveals the 'industrial' exploitation of the animals there and the terrible ecological effects of the plant,¹⁰¹ and Marianne Bruns's novel *Der grüne Zweig* (1979), in which the author converts the biblical story of Noah's Flood into a parable of global ecological catastrophe.¹⁰² This novel anticipates the tendencies in 1980s literature to emphasise the worldwide scale of environmental destruction and to illustrate the critical nature of the situation with the powerful images of myth. The meaning of the parable is made clear by the interpolated conversations of a group of guests at a West German spa, who listen to this adaptation of the Noah story at their get-togethers and talk about ecological questions. Through this device the author informs the reader about ecology and ecological problems in rather a didactic way, explaining terms, quoting Western experts and naming facts, e.g.:

Ununterbrochen puffen wir z.B. ungeniert Kohlenmonoxid in die Atmosphäre. Allein die USA befördern jährlich über 100 Millionen Tonnen hinauf. Dreiviertel davon durch Autos. Die DDR schickt uns

ihre versalzene (durch die Kali-Werke versalzene)
Werra ins Land; Schweden beklagt sich, weil es die
Giftgase der englischen Betriebe schlucken muß! Was
muten wir alle der Luft und dem Wasser und der Erde
zu: Gase, Gifte, Säuren. (p. 80)

Whereas environmental prose went into relative
retreat in the late 1970s, there was greater continuity
in poetry, which was apparently less affected by
political constraints, as also in the second half of the
1960s. For instance, Wulf Kirsten's poetry volume *der
bleibaum*, which contained several sharply critical poems
on environmental topics, appeared all the same in
1977,¹⁰³ and *Veränderte Landschaft*, an anthology of GDR
landscape poetry edited by Kirsten and published in 1979,
included a number of works depicting ugly and polluted
industrial landscapes: not only older poems such as
Lorenc's 'Die Struga' (written 1966) and Schulze's
'Landnahme' (1973), but also more recent works such as
Ulrich Berkes's 'Der ascheberg' (1976) about a rubbish
dump and Roland Erb's 'Undine der Elsteraue', published
here for the first time, with its image of a water nymph
dancing over the 'oily mud' and 'concrete' of a river
landscape near Halle.¹⁰⁴ Commenting on this book, Ursula
Heukenkamp was even moved to criticise the prevalence of
such images in the GDR poetry of the Seventies:

Diese Wendung verkargt die poetischen Landschaften.
Die Bedeutung der Natur schränkt sich darin auf den
ökologischen Aspekt ein; die Landschaft auf
problematische Umwelt.¹⁰⁵

In the East German poetry of the late 1970s the doubts about progress that had been appearing in poems at least since the mid-Sixties started to develop into pessimism. This tendency, undoubtedly intensified by the harsh cultural climate after 1976, appeared in verse but not (yet) in prose, perhaps because poetry was, as indicated above, less affected by political constraints and perhaps because it was more sensitive to changes in public consciousness. The images of Kirsten's 'nebelabend' (written 1977) seem to capture a mood of painfully slow progress and desperation in a stagnating society:

mit verklumpten Füßen
über das stoppelfeld
in den abend hinein.

irgendwo, dachten wir,
muß sich die unendlichkeit
leerer weizenschläge verlieren,
die in erwartung des pflugs

in lebloser starre zu atmen einhielt.¹⁰⁶

In 'Christian Wagner' (written 1978), Kirsten evokes the vital conception of nature of a nineteenth-century farmer-poet and then contrasts that with the present vulnerability of nature:

vor tausend jahren aßen wir zu morgen.

aller lebendigen zukunftsform ist die bewohnbare
erde,

gebüschig, mit einer krautschicht und von gras
bewachsen.

sind wir auf hundert jahre noch geborgen?¹⁰⁷

Like *Der grüne Zweig*, this poem exemplifies two tendencies in GDR environmental literature which were to become widespread in the 1980s, the extension of ecological concern to the global scale and the use of mythical imagery (visions of demonic powers associated with Christian Wagner's view of the world). The loss of belief in progress that can be seen in Kirsten's poems is even more pronounced in those of Günter Kunert, e.g. 'Lagebericht' (1977, FRG), which gives a deeply pessimistic assessment of man's present and future situation.¹⁰⁸ Even Volker Braun, though still basically forward-looking, was drawn to write about the grim history and possibly bleak future prospects of

civilisation in *Training des aufrechten Gangs* (1979). The poems 'Das Forum' and 'Machu Picchu' reflect on the transitoriness of the Roman and Inca empires and, implicitly, of other hierarchical societies including the GDR. However, Braun here still maintains the hope that there are alternative ways forward, like the Roman emperor Hadrian's use of his army to build cities rather than to burn them down ('Neuer Zweck der Armee Hadrians').¹⁰⁹

6. 1979 (revival of literary debate) to 1989 (collapse of SED rule): widespread critical discussion of 'progress'

Without any decisive act of liberalisation on the part of the SED, a broad environmental debate emerged in the GDR from about 1979 onwards. The participants included not only the established actors - the Protestant Church, writers, social scientists, SED functionaries and state bodies - but now also unofficial ecology and peace groups operating under church protection, and even concerned citizens outside these. The Chernobyl nuclear accident in the Soviet Union in 1986, for example, prompted many citizens and unofficial groups to make demands and sign petitions for the abandonment of nuclear

power in the GDR.¹¹⁰ In the 1980s the authorities for their part responded more actively than before to public pressure over environmental issues: the 'Gesellschaft für Natur und Umwelt' was founded in 1980 as an organisation for active conservationists,¹¹¹ while in the field of propaganda official newspapers, journals and electronic media publicised the environmental achievements of the GDR.¹¹²

Writers, with their public statements and essays, were now playing a more active part in the environmental discussion than ever before. At the Ninth Writers' Congress in 1983, which was dominated by the contemporary threat of nuclear war arising from East-West tension, the poet Richard Pietraß warned of another danger threatening the planet, 'die schleichende, aber immer schneller fortschreitende Zerstörung unserer natürlichen Umwelt',¹¹³ and the poet and songwriter Reimar Gilsenbach emphasised the role of artists and writers in imparting values of responsibility towards nature.¹¹⁴ Besides making these speeches, Gilsenbach wrote a guide to ecologically responsible treatment of the natural environment (*Rund um die Natur*, 1982),¹¹⁵ and Pietraß composed an essay on the global extinction crisis, 'Vom Vergehen der Arten', which was written in 1982 but suppressed for ideological reasons until 1987 (see chapter 2, section 5 below).¹¹⁶ While writers in the Eighties warned increasingly about global ecological

problems, they also agitated for the protection of the local or regional environment. From 1984 onward Jurij Koch wrote a series of essays and speeches advocating the protection of the Lausitz landscape and Sorbian culture from destruction by lignite mining (see chapter 2, section 2 below),¹¹⁷ and in 1988 Jurij Brezan spoke out in favour of the retention and creation of field paths.¹¹⁸

The controversy sparked off by Brezan's apparently anti-scientific remarks of 1979 demonstrates how writers were involved in a broader public debate. Brezan had made provocative comments in *Sinn und Form* about the danger of genetic research, including the assertion 'Ich jedenfalls habe Angst vor den Biologen, und ich fürchte, wir alle müssen Angst haben'. The molecular biologist Erhard Geißler, who also criticised Brezan's views on science in several scientific publications in the early Eighties,¹¹⁹ responded to the author's remarks in an open letter published, together with Brezan's reply, in *Sinn und Form* in 1980.¹²⁰ Geißler pointed out the probable future medical benefits of genetic engineering, emphasised the highly-developed sense of responsibility among molecular biologists and rebuked Brezan for wholesale discrimination against entire professional groups. Brezan replied by redefining the object of his fears less personally but equally provocatively as 'die

Summe aller der naturwissenschaftlichen Aktivitäten, die mir wie Wechsel, ausgestellt auf die Existenz künftiger Generationen, erscheinen'. He called for the possible renunciation of some research if it is established that the dangers are too great, and expressed the hope that scientists worldwide would concentrate their efforts on keeping the earth habitable for future generations. Although Brezan played no further personal part in it, the *Sinn und Form* controversy about scientific ethics raged on until 1986, revived by Geißler's polemic of 1984 against writers sceptical of modern biology.¹²¹ As one might expect, Geißler's arguments were supported by scientists (Karlheinz Lohs, and in essence Anna M. Wobus) and opposed by writers (Werner Creutziger, Manfred Wolter) and a literary scholar (Jürgen Hauschke), but, more surprisingly, the prominent geneticists Benno Müller-Hill from the Federal Republic and Helmut Böhme from the GDR stressed that fears about genetics were justifiable. The *Sinn und Form* debate was an acrimonious one, but the subsequent dialogue about science between writers and scientists seems to have been conducted with greater mutual understanding amongst the participants, e.g. at the 'Gaterslebener Begegnung von Wissenschaftlern und Künstlern' which discussed issues of genetics in 1986.¹²² The anthology *Windvogelviereck: Schriftsteller über Wissenschaften und Wissenschaftler* (1987) is also filled with a spirit of empathy with science.¹²³

Authors in the 1980s were not only speaking out directly in the environmental debate to a greater extent than ever before, but were also producing much more fiction and poetry on environmental topics. In fact, in the Eighties it becomes hard to maintain a firm distinction between 'environmental literature' and 'environmental debate', for prose fiction now becomes more essayistic in character and literary works start to be discussed in terms of their *ecological* message as well as of their literary merit.¹²⁴ The importance of environmental literature, already recognised by readers and reviewers, finally received official acknowledgement with the dedication of the Writers' Union journal *neue deutsche literatur* to the topic (*UM WELT*) in November 1989.¹²⁵

The new importance of literature, and especially of prose works, in the East German environmental debate of the Eighties is demonstrated by the impact of Hanns Cibulka's *Swantow* (1982).¹²⁶ This is a narrative in diary form which describes a three-month-long summer stay on the Baltic island of Rügen and which contains critical reflections on, among other things, chemical and radioactive pollution and the effects of this on people and the ecosystem. When in 1981 excerpts from *Swantow* were published in advance in *neue deutsche literatur*,¹²⁷

they were (according to Anita Mallinckrodt) seen as a contribution to the continuing dialogue about ecology, but trouble arose with the economic and scientific establishment when West German newspaper reviews of the excerpted version were broadcast into the GDR by West German radio, making Cibulka out to be 'the first Green in the GDR'.¹²⁸ The book version published in 1982 contained substantial alterations, toning down criticism of nuclear power, the chemical industry and 'scientific' medicine and including specific examples of pollution in Western countries.¹²⁹ Even in a censored version, *Swantow* was still powerful enough to stir up lively ecological discussion among the critics and at the hundred or more readings given by Cibulka, and to stimulate readers to write hundreds of (apparently appreciative) letters to the author.¹³⁰

In several respects *Swantow* typifies trends in the East German environmental prose of the Eighties. Unlike, say, Marianne Bruns, Cibulka does not just concentrate on damage done to the natural environment, but undertakes a broader critique of industrial society, particularly of the affluent but qualitatively poor modern lifestyle. Documentary and factual material on pollution, radioactive substances and nuclear weapons is cited to back up the author's arguments. Cibulka seeks the deeper roots of man's problems in the supplanting of the spiritual by the material, and proposes an alternative

way of thinking, listening to one's 'inner voice'. The symbols and mythical motifs in *Swantow*, such as the narrator's visions of the lost city of Vineta and the Golden Fleece, apparently form part of this way of thinking.

The literary adaptation of myth is an even more prominent feature in Christa Wolf's *Kassandra* (1983), a first-person retelling of the story of the Trojan prophetess, and Irmtraud Morgner's *Amanda* (also 1983), a kaleidoscopic novel in which witches are active in the contemporary GDR.¹³¹ These books, which in spite of their different styles contain surprisingly similar ideas, seek to counter the prevailing one-sided (and, in this analysis, *masculine*) ideology of rationalism by drawing on subjective experience and feminine values, *inter alia* on the ancient, pre-patriarchal traditions represented by the myths of Cassandra and, in Morgner's case, Pandora and other figures. Both *Amanda* and *Kassandra* with its four associated essays undertake a thorough critique of civilisation, whose development has historically been warped owing to the oppression of women by men. In their critique of modern technological civilisation, Wolf and Morgner examine the one-sidedness and destructiveness of science, the contemporary threat of nuclear war and also environmental problems; on the latter point, Morgner pays particular attention to

dangerous changes on the *global* scale, such as the destruction of tropical rainforests and the increase in carbon dioxide and ozone-destroying chemicals in the atmosphere. A key difference between the viewpoints expressed in *Amanda* and *Kassandra* is that while Morgner sees a real possibility of saving the planet from war if women and 'heretics' become politically active¹³² (like the witches in the novel), Wolf seems to doubt the effectiveness of such action in the desperate contemporary situation; for example, the peaceful, utopian community that she imagines existing in the vicinity of Troy is destroyed by the conquering Greeks, like the city itself. Both works, finally, played an important part in the discussion of peace, women's issues and ecology in both German states.

The relative lack of hope in *Kassandra* may well be part of the pessimistic trend which appeared in GDR prose in the 1980s after previously having been confined to verse. Negative images of historical 'progress' or of the future may of course be intended as warnings rather than as literal expressions of the author's opinion, but they still indicate deep unease about the state of things. Jurij Brezan's little story 'Der Staunemann' (1980) envisages a future in which a man is specially employed to marvel at the beauties of nature on behalf of the people who have no time to do so in a rationally organised industrial society.¹³³ More sombre pictures of

the future are created by Franz Fühmann in the short stories of *Saiäns Fiktschen* (1980), which are set in a totalitarian, static society without development,¹³⁴ and by Eberhard Panitz in his warning story 'Eiszeit' (1983), which describes the plight of a group of survivors after what is apparently a nuclear attack.¹³⁵

Wolf's *Störfall* (1987), her contribution to the post-Chernobyl debate in the form of a fictive, reflective diary, expresses similar critical ideas about technological civilisation to those contained in *Kassandra*, but now with a heightened awareness of the destructive ecological impact of technology.¹³⁶ The root of the problem, which in *Kassandra* was sought in the early history of civilisation, is now even traced back to the possibly faulty evolutionary development of the human brain. *Störfall* does, though, illustrate a beneficial use of science and technology in the form of a brain operation to save the life of the narrator's brother. Indeed, there seems to have been a more balanced appreciation of the 'plus' and 'minus' sides of science in the prose of the mid-to-late Eighties, such as the anthology *Windvogelviereck* (1987) mentioned above and Helga Königsdorf's narrative *Respektloser Umgang* (1986), which illustrates the grave responsibility that scientists bear with the example of the atomic physicists whose work paved the way for the atom bomb (see chapter 3

below).¹³⁷

Like 'environmental' prose in general, critical rural prose underwent a revival in the 1980s. Though some works still depicted the village as an idyllic place of escape¹³⁸ and others, such as Gerhard Holtz-Baumert's story 'Die Hecke' (1981),¹³⁹ gave at best a simplistic, didactic example of conservation aimed at children, these were now overshadowed by more substantial and more critical works. Joachim Nowotny's *Abschiedsdisco* (1980) and *Letzter Auftritt der Komparsen* (1981) highlight the social disruption and physical devastation caused when villages are sacrificed to lignite mining,¹⁴⁰ and Jurij Koch's *Der Kirschbaum* (1984) describes a similar situation in which country-dwellers are threatened by a planned reservoir (see chapter 3 below).¹⁴¹ Motifs from Sorbian folklore and mythology are employed in this novella to represent a way of thinking which is both alternative and traditional. Lia Pirskawetz's novel *Der Stille Grund* (1985) deals with the dilemmas that arise when it is planned to build a factory in a picturesque valley in the Elbsandsteingebirge.¹⁴² Changes in East German rural life, including the introduction of ecologically harmful 'industrial' agricultural practices, are examined in the novels *Bild des Vaters* (1982) by Jurij Brezan and *Die Totenkeule* (1988) by Matthias Körner (see chapter 3 below).¹⁴³

The quantitative expansion of environmental literature after about 1980 affected both prose and verse, though ecological verse had continued to flourish in the preceding years of cultural restriction. One important focus of the poets' concern was still the destruction of nature and the environment in the GDR. In Czechowski's poem 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet' (1981), for example, the nature reserve of the title has been devastated by heavy earth-moving machinery for the sake of 'progress' (see chapter 4, section 2 below).¹⁴⁴ In 'Freies Feld' (1982) by Pietraß a skylark in the act of song has to contend with smoke from a factory chimney.¹⁴⁵ Poets also pointed out the social cost of environmental destruction. Lorenc's 'Dorfbegräbnis' (written 1979, published 1981) laments the death of a Sorbian village swallowed up by an open-cast lignite mine (see chapter 4, section 4 below).¹⁴⁶

The relatively new themes that dominate the environmental prose of the Eighties - including the global scale of environmental problems, the destructive tendencies of industrial society and mythical motifs - are also common in the ecological poetry of the period. In Walter Werner's 'Umwelt' (1982) and Heinz Czechowski's 'Spaziergang' (1987), disquieting observations in a familiar place precipitate visions of global or even cosmic catastrophe.¹⁴⁷ In 'Spaziergang' Czechowski

writes of an unexpected encounter with a civil defence exercise in the Rosental park in Leipzig:

Dort,
Wo die Kleingärtner hausen,
Zwischen Kürbis und Sellerie, Rettich und Aster,
Brach keuchend aus Buschwerk hervor
Eine Rüsselmaske im Tarnanzug, ihr
Folgt den andern Gemusterten, sie
Üben das Überleben.
Über die Dächer von Wahren
Rollte die schreckliche Sonne.

Richard Pietraß places a strong emphasis on such world issues as ecological destruction, hunger and war in his poetry volume *Spielball* (1987). The title poem depicts the earth itself as man's 'plaything', under assault from his grandiose schemes, and in 'Auwald' the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse make an appearance in updated form as bringers of ecological catastrophe.¹⁴⁸ Unusually for a poetry book, the ecological aspects of *Spielball* were widely debated as well as its literary value (see chapter 4, section 6 below). In the face of the interlinked global problems, some poets develop a comprehensive critique of the industrial civilisation which seems to be their cause. Cibulka's poem 'Lagebericht' (1981/86), which in its original version formed part of *Swantow*,

offers a thorough critique of today's materialistic way of life ('Wir,/ die Unzufriedenen,/ die im Überfluß leben') and its effects.¹⁴⁹ Braun subjects industrial society, its destruction of nature and its deformation of human lives to a penetrating examination in such poems as 'Material V: Burghammer' (1987), in which the poet returns to the devastated landscape of a former lignite mine where he once worked, and 'Die Megamaschine' (1988), which criticises industrial society in its capitalist variant.¹⁵⁰ In the first part of 'Die Megamaschine' the mythical Babylonian hero Gilgamesh, who has a mighty forest cut down 'in order to make a name for himself', seems to be an archetypal representative of men's desire to conquer nature.

The pessimistic tendency which we noticed in the poetry of the late Seventies remained strong in the Eighties, no doubt fuelled both by the stagnation of GDR society and by the gloomy world political and ecological situation. Wulf Kirsten continued to express a sombre view of present-day reality in 'lebensspuren' (written 1981) with its sad image of 'die niemandsgehöfte heimatlichen dorfs' and in 'veilchenzeit' (1989) with its distressing contrast between the former idyllic appearance of a rural landscape and its present churned-up and polluted state.¹⁵¹ Kirsten's growing loss of hope was now shared by Heinz Czechowski, whose poem 'In den

Ruinenstädten des zweiten Weltkriegs' (1987) concludes with the following apocalyptic outlook:

Wohin du auch fliehst, deine Gebeine
Zerbricht dir der Bagger
Am Morgen des Jüngsten Gerichts, Lokomotiven
Singen den Psalm der Fossilien. Wir
Sind umstellt und zehren
Von unserer Aussicht, Lochstreifen
Flattern im Aufwind
Der Zukunft entgegen.¹⁵²

Some poets could, though, still maintain a defiant hope in spite of their awareness of great danger. Braun admits the reality of ecological destruction, oppression and war but still holds fast to the assertion 'Nun bin ich froh' in his poem of that title (1987).¹⁵³ And in spite of the serious criticisms and warnings contained within it, Cibulka's 'Lagebericht' (1986) finishes with an image of hope:

ein Läufer
bringt die Kunde,
daß im Erzgebirge,
am Kamm,
die Lärche wieder grünt.¹⁵⁴

7. Summary and conclusion

In the years 1949 to 1965 the literature of the GDR, including poetry, prose fiction and essayistic works, loyally supported SED-sponsored industrialisation and technological progress. The subjection of the natural landscape to industrial development was largely glossed over and depicted as a harmonious process, although in 1963-65 the authorities did for a while permit the representation of everyday problems of industrial society in novels like *Der geteilte Himmel*.

In 1965 to 1971 literature as a whole continued to proclaim the benefits of technological progress, indeed, placing a new emphasis on the contemporary 'scientific-technological revolution'. After the Eleventh Plenum of 1965 writers of prose fiction largely ceased criticising the disadvantages of progress and retreated to a conformist position, but some poets developed the prose writers' criticism further, depicting polluted and disfigured landscapes to illustrate the ambivalence of progress.

The cultural liberalisation initiated by Honecker in 1971 brought a flowering of socially critical prose. Wolf and others criticised the domination of society by science and technology at the expense of humane values. The early Seventies also saw the first appearance of a

public environmental debate in the GDR, with authors playing an active part in this. There was no such clear turning point in poetry, but poets were expressing increasing doubts about progress with their frequent images of industrially devastated landscapes and ecological disturbance, as in Schulze's 'Landnahme' (1973).

The Biermann crisis of 1976 had a similar effect to that of the Eleventh Plenum of 1965, discouraging writers from publishing environmentally critical prose or taking part in the environmental debate. In contrast to the prose writers, poets continued to write verse on ecological topics. In poetry, but not yet in prose, we see the appearance of pessimistic ideas in the work of Kunert and Kirsten, who had by now grown highly disillusioned with 'progress'. Both poetry and prose (Bruns's *Der grüne Zweig*, 1979) were starting to reflect awareness of the global extent of environmental problems and to turn to myth as a non-rational means of explication.

After 1979 a lively and sophisticated environmental debate emerged, with writers playing a more active part than in the early Seventies. In their 'literary' works, authors like Braun, Cibulka and Wolf conducted a penetrating critique of industrial civilisation, both capitalist and socialist, and a search for peaceful,

sustainable alternatives. The global context was an important theme in the environmental literature of the Eighties, as also was myth. The pessimistic tendency which had already appeared in poetry now spread to prose.

From the above sketch of the evolution of environmental literature in the GDR we can see that the development of environmental prose was strongly influenced by shifts in cultural policy. Prose writers were able to criticise the effects of technological progress in the 'thaws' of 1963-65, 1971-76 and the 1980s, but this criticism went sharply into decline after 1965 and again after 1976. Writers' public statements and essays, which, like prose fiction works, were texts with a relatively wide public impact, followed a similar pattern of development, first appearing in the 'thaw' of the early Seventies, disappearing in the post-1976 'freeze' and reappearing after 1979. In contrast, environmental poetry shows a continuous development from the mid-Sixties through to 1989, presumably because it was less liable to political restriction on account of its smaller readership and public impact. This political factor also partly explains why serious misgivings about progress appeared in poetry as early as the mid-Sixties, several years before prose writers published similar sentiments, and why the pessimistic tendency in the poetry of the late Seventies also took some time to spread to prose. The special sensitivity of poetry to

changes in public mood provides another partial explanation for the time lag. Having established the development of East German environmental literature in its general outlines, we shall now go on to examine the literature of the Eighties in greater detail.

Notes to chapter 1

1. See Mike Dennis, *German Democratic Republic: Politics, Economics and Society* (London and New York: Pinter, 1988), pp. 129-30.
2. See Anita M. Mallinckrodt, *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR: Literature, Church, Party and Interest Groups in Their Socio-Political Context* (Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of America, 1987), pp. 28-29.
3. Christa Wolf, 'Literatur und Zeitgenossenschaft', *SuF*, 7 (1959) 3, pp. 7-11. The same propagandistic message is conveyed by Stefan Heym's reportage on Soviet technological achievements, 'Das kosmische Zeitalter', *SuF*, 7 (1959) 1, pp. 72-101.
4. Hans Marchwitza, *Roheisen* (Berlin, 1955).
5. The criticism of *Roheisen* is examined by Gudrun Klatt, 'Proletarisch-revolutionäres Erbe als

Angebot: Vom Umgang mit Erfahrungen proletarisch-revolutionärer Kunst während der Übergangsperiode', in *Literarisches Leben in der DDR 1945-60*, Ingeborg Münz-Koenen et al. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1980), pp. 244-92 (esp. pp. 266-70); Martin Straub, 'Marchwitzas "Roheisen"', *WB*, 31 (1985) 6, pp. 983-92; Dennis Tate, *The East German Novel: Identity, Community, Continuity* (Bath: Bath Univ. Press, 1984), p. 46.

6. See Tate, *The East German Novel*, pp. 90-95, for a more detailed account of cultural policy and literary developments in the period outlined here.
7. Erik Neutsch, *Spur der Steine: Roman* (Halle/Saale: mdv, 1964). Wolf, *Der geteilte Himmel: Erzählung* (Munich: dtv, 1973; 19th edition, 1985). Werner Bräunig, 'Rummelplatz' (extract), *Ein Kranich am Himmel: Unbekanntes und Bekanntes*, edited by Heinz Sachs (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1981), pp. 9-179. Extracts from *Rummelplatz* were originally published in an anthology in 1964 and in *ndl* in 1965 (see also note 10 below).
8. Pp. 7 and 28 of *Der geteilte Himmel* give similar descriptions of air and water pollution in Halle.
9. See Alexander Stephan, *Christa Wolf, Autorenbücher*, 4 (Munich: C.H. Beck and edition text + kritik, 1979), pp. 32-33, 55-59.
10. See Bernhard Greiner, *Die Literatur der Arbeitswelt*

in der DDR (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1974), pp. 136-39, 236. *Rummelplatz* was one of the literary works condemned at the Eleventh Plenum of the SED Central Committee in 1965 and was never allowed to be published in book form, although the large 'first volume' was completed (see the notes in *Ein Kranich am Himmel*, p. 490).

11. Erwin Strittmatter, *Ole Bienkopp: Roman* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1964). On the subject of the reception, see Reinhard Hillich, 'Aufforderung zum Mitdenken: Erwin Strittmatters Roman "Ole Bienkopp"', in *Werke und Wirkungen: DDR-Literatur in der Diskussion*, edited by Inge Münz-Koenen (Leipzig: Reclam, 1987), pp. 61-109.
12. This socialist literary concept of nature was expressed in a differentiated form by Johannes Bobrowski, in answer to the question of what distinguishes a modern nature poem from a classical or romantic one: 'Das reine Naturgedicht, das auch in diesem Jahrhundert noch gepflegt worden ist, zum Beispiel bei Wilhelm Lehmann gelegentlich [...], das halte ich nicht mehr für erheblich. Ich glaube, daß, wenn heute ein Lyriker ein Naturgedicht schreibt, er nicht nur seine Person, die er ja sowieso als lyrisches Ich in das Gedicht mitbringt, da hat, sondern daß er eine Beziehung sucht zu den

Menschen, die in dieser Natur leben, die diese Natur auch gestalten; eine Landschaft, in der Menschen gearbeitet haben, in der Menschen leben, in der Menschen tätig sind. Er soll auch zum Beispiel eine Geschichte menschlicher Arbeit in der Landschaft auffinden.' Josef-Hermann Sauter, 'Ansichten und Absichten: Ein Interview des Berliner Rundfunks' (2 September 1964), in Bobrowski, *Gesammelte Werke*, edited by Eberhard Haufe (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1987), vol. IV, pp. 469-73 (pp. 469-70).

13. See Dennis, *German Democratic Republic*, p. 129.
14. Johannes R. Becher, 'Lied der neuen Erde', *Auswahl in sechs Bänden*, (Berlin: Aufbau, 1952), vol. II, pp. 176-77. Previously published in *Volk, im Dunkel wandelnd* (1948). The poem dates given in the text will usually refer to the first known publication of the poems in book form, though dates of writing will sometimes be cited instead if appropriate.
15. Bertolt Brecht, 'Der Blumengarten', 'Der Rauch', *Gesammelte Werke*, volume X, *Gedichte 3*, edited by Elisabeth Hauptmann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), pp. 1009, 1012 respectively. On the subject of the man-nature relationship in Brecht's poetry, see Jürgen Haupt, *Natur und Lyrik: Naturbeziehungen im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1983), pp. 135-62 ('B. Brecht: "Gespräch über

Bäume'''); pp. 152-58 on the 'Buckower Elegien' are of particular relevance here.

16. Georg Maurer, 'Stunde im April', *Werke in zwei Bänden*, edited by Walfried Hartinger et al. (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1987), vol. II, p. 50. On the subject of the man-nature relationship in Maurer's thinking, see his 'Gedanken zur Naturlyrik', *SuF*, 23 (1971) 1, pp. 21-30.
17. The 'Dreistrophenkilender' poems are included in Maurer, *Werke*, vol. I, pp. 254-96. Although these poems were written in 1950-51, they could not be published until 1961 because the authorities feared that the public would misunderstand them as an escape from political reality. See Joseph Pischel, 'Das Verhältnis Mensch-Natur in der Selbstverständigung von Schriftstellern der DDR', *WB*, 22 (1976) 1, pp. 74-99 (p. 88).
18. Heinz Czechowski, 'Mikrokosmos Rosental: Naturdichtung bei Georg Maurer', in *Dichtung ist deine Welt*, edited by Gerhard Wolf (Halle/Saale: mdv, 1973), pp. 85-97 (p. 90). Compare this comment by Czechowski with the poem 'Am Fluß' from the 'Dreistrophenkilender' cycle:

Vom Uferbogen

schnellen die Wellen wie Pfeile,

in glitzernder Eile
von der Ferne gesogen.

Dann fließen sie wieder gemächlich
über den Grund
und werden breit und gesprächig
wie redeweiter Mund.

Nun sind sie ein glattes Gesicht.
Doch laß dich nicht täuschen:
Die Fische spielen unter dem Licht
mit grünen Geräuschen.

Maurer, *Werke*, vol. I, p. 24.

19. Maurer, 'Vogel und Wald', *Werke*, vol. II, pp. 5-9.
20. Axel Goodbody, 'Deutsche Ökolyrik: Comparative Observations on the Emergence and Expression of Environmental Consciousness in West and East German Poetry', in *German Literature at a Time of Change 1989-1990: German Unity and German Identity in Literary Perspective*, edited by Arthur Williams, Stuart Parkes and Roland Smith (Bern, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Paris, Vienna: P. Lang, 1991), pp. 373-400 (p. 388).
21. Peter Huchel, 'Das Zeichen', *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. I, *Die Gedichte*, edited by Axel Vieregg (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), pp. 113-14.

22. Stephan Hermlin, 'Die Vögel und der Test', in *Die eigene Stimme: Lyrik der DDR*, edited by Ursula Heukenkamp, Heinz Kahlau and Wulf Kirsten (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1988), p. 89. Johannes Bobrowski's poem 'Vogelstraßen 1957' appears to have the similar subject of migratory birds being killed by an atomic explosion; *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. I, pp. 114-15. Peter Huchel's 'Psalm' (published 1963) prophesies the destruction of man and nature in a nuclear war; *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. I, p. 157. Further examples of contemporary poems against nuclear weapons are given by Goodbody, 'Deutsche Ökolyrik', pp. 386-87.
23. Günter Kunert, 'Laika', *Erinnerung an einen Planeten: Gedichte* (Munich: Heyse, 1963), p. 60.
24. Rainer Kirsch, 'Gespräch mit dem Saurier', in *Gespräch mit dem Saurier: Gedichte*, Sarah and Rainer Kirsch (Berlin: Neues Leben, 1965), pp. 43-44.
25. 'Bericht des Politbüros an das 11. Plenum des ZK der SED, vorgetragen von Erich Honecker', in *Dokumente zur Kunst-, Literatur- und Kulturpolitik der SED 1949-1970*, edited by Elimar Schubbe (Stuttgart: Seewald, 1972), pp. 1076-1088 (p. 1077). The significance of the Eleventh Plenum for GDR literature is described by Tate, *The East German Novel*, pp. 130-34, and by Wolfgang Emmerich, *Kleine*

- Literaturgeschichte der DDR* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1981; fifth, expanded and revised edition, 1989), pp. 166-68.
26. See the entry 'Wissenschaftlich-technische Revolution', in *DDR Handbuch*, edited by Bundesministerium für innerdeutsche Beziehungen (Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1985), pp. 1524-26; and the entry 'Neues Ökonomisches System', p. 945.
 27. See Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR* (1989), pp. 168-76 ('Das "Neue Ökonomische System" von 1963 und die Literatur').
 28. Wolf, 'Ein Besuch', *Die Dimension des Autors: Essays und Aufsätze, Reden und Gespräche 1959-85* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1987), pp. 695-726.
 29. See Tate, *The East German Novel*, chapter 4, 'A Lifetime's Experience in the "Sober Light of Day"', pp. 135-76.
 30. See the entry 'Landeskulturgesetz', in *DDR Handbuch* (1985), pp. 782-83.
 31. Most of Bräunig's *Gewöhnliche Leute* stories can be found in *Ein Kranich am Himmel*. Neutsch, *Die anderen und ich: Erzählungen* (Halle/Saale: mdv, 1970).
 32. Bräunig, 'Gewöhnliche Leute', *Ein Kranich am Himmel*, pp. 234-69.
 33. Wolf, 'Neue Lebensansichten eines Katers', *Unter den Linden: Drei unwahrscheinliche Geschichten* (Berlin

and Weimar: Aufbau, 1974), pp. 61-96.

34. Brigitte Reimann, *Franziska Linkerhand: Roman* (Munich: dtv, 1977), e.g. pp. 120-21, 150-53, 157.
35. Wolf, *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (Halle/Saale: mdv, 1968).
36. Joachim Nowotny, *Der Riese im Paradies* (1969). Cited by Knabe, 'Zweifel an der Industriegesellschaft', pp. 209-10, 236.
37. Hanns Cibulka, *Sanddornzeit: Tagebuchblätter von Hiddensee* (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1970). Cited by Knabe, 'Zweifel an der Industriegesellschaft', p. 212; and by Mallinckrodt, *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR*, pp. 59-60.
38. Strittmatter, *Schulzenhofer Kramkalender* (1966), a selection from which is included in *Damals auf der Farm und andere Geschichten* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1984), pp. 5-60; *Ein Dienstag im September: 16 Romane im Stenogramm* (Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau, 1977), originally published 1969; *3/4hundert Klein geschichten* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1985), originally published 1971; *Die blaue Nachtigall oder Der Anfang von etwas* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1976), originally published 1972. Strittmatter's diaries of 1966-67 are much more critical about science, progress and civilisation than the works named above and were - significantly - not published

until 1981; *Selbstermunterungen* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1981).

39. Strittmatter, 'Grüne Lauben', *3/4hundert Kleingeschichten*, pp. 72-73.
40. Strittmatter, 'Frühling aus Menschenhand', *3/4hundert Kleingeschichten*, pp. 34-35 (p. 35).
41. Strittmatter, 'Kraftstrom', *Ein Dienstag im September*, pp. 75-89.
42. See Jürgen Lehmann, 'Das erzählte Dorf: Anmerkungen zur Funktion von "Landleben-Literatur" in der DDR', in *Kontroversen, alte und neue: Akten des VII. Internationalen Germanisten-Kongresses Göttingen 1985*, edited by Karl Pestalozzi et al. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986), vol. X, pp. 97-104 (esp. pp. 100-104).
43. For a summary of the *Forum* debate see Wolfgang Ertl, *Natur und Landschaft in der Lyrik der DDR: Walter Werner, Wulf Kirsten und Uwe Greßmann* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1982), pp. 6-12 (esp. pp. 6-9).
44. Quoted by Ertl, 'Ökolyrik in der DDR: Eine Beispielsreihe', in *Studies in GDR Culture and Society 5*, edited by Margy Gerber (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), pp. 221-35 (p. 222). Kunert made the same point in contemporary poems like 'Windstille Rheinwärts', *Verkündigung des Wetters: Gedichte* (Munich: Hanser, 1966), pp. 55-56.

45. Ertl, *Natur und Landschaft*, p. 8; Ertl, 'Ökolyrik in der DDR', p. 223.
46. Volker Braun, 'Das weite Feld', 'Messe', *Wir und nicht sie: Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), pp. 14, 15 respectively.
47. Wulf Kirsten, 'feldzug', *die erde bei Meissen: gedichte* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1986), p. 17 (published in *satzanfang*, 1970). Heinz Czechowski, 'Ode auf eine Motorradfahrt', *Wasserfahrt: Gedichte* (Halle/Saale: mdv, 1968), pp. 12-15.
48. See Hartung, 'Neuere Naturlyrik in der DDR', in *Naturlyrik und Gesellschaft*, edited by Norbert Mecklenburg (Stuttgart: Klett, 1977), pp. 179-97 (pp. 186-90). Besides some later poems from the early Seventies, Hartung criticises Axel Schulze's 'Waldsee', in *Saison für Lyrik: Neue Gedichte von siebzehn Autoren* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1968), p. 187; and Sarah Kirsch's 'Schöner See Wasseraug', *Landaufenthalt: Gedichte* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1967), p. 37.
49. Braun, 'Das Vogtland', *Wir und nicht sie*, pp. 12-13. Czechowski, 'Peripherie', *Wasserfahrt*, p. 52.
50. Kito Lorenc, 'Die Struga', *Wortland: Gedichte* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1984), pp. 9-10 (p. 10) (published in *Struga - Bilder einer Landschaft*, 1967). On the environmental effects of the lignite industry, see

the sources named in the introduction to the thesis, note 7.

51. Lorenc, 'Versuch über uns', *Wortland*, pp. 33-36 (p. 36) (published in *Struga*, 1967).
52. See, for example, Lorenc, 'Aber wenn ihr weint', *Wortland*, pp. 23-26 (written 1965, published in *Struga*, 1967); and Czechowski, 'Wasserfahrt', *Wasserfahrt*, pp. 106-08.
53. Czechowski, 'Reisen', *Wasserfahrt*, pp. 122-23 (p. 122).
54. Honecker, 'Hauptaufgabe umfaßt auch weitere Erhöhung des kulturellen Niveaus', in *Dokumente zur Kunst-, Literatur- und Kulturpolitik der SED 1971-1974*, edited by Gisela Rüß (Stuttgart: Seewald, 1976), pp. 287-88 (p. 287). Developments at this turning-point are summarised by Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR* (1989), pp. 242-44.
55. In 1972 the leading cultural policy figure Kurt Hager said at a Central Committee meeting, 'Viele Vorschläge und Initiativen lassen erkennen, daß die Werktätigen nicht nur unter guten Bedingungen arbeiten, sondern auch in einer schönen Umwelt leben möchten. Die natürliche Umwelt gehört zu den unmittelbaren Arbeits- und Lebensbedingungen des Menschen.' Hager, 'Zu Fragen der Kulturpolitik der SED', in Rüß, *Dokumente*, pp. 493-528 (p. 501).
56. See the entry 'Ministerium für Umweltschutz und

- Wasserwirtschaft', in *DDR Handbuch* (1985), pp. 910-11; and see the entry 'Umweltschutz', pp. 1369-81, for other contemporary measures.
57. See the sources named in the introduction to the thesis, note 8.
58. Mallinckrodt summarises the discussion arising from *The Limits to Growth* in *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR*, pp. 31-32.
59. Mallinckrodt, *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR*, pp. 31-32, 173, cites Jürgen Kuczynski, 'Das Gleichgewicht der Null', in *Zu den Theorien des Nullwachstums* (Frankfurt am Main, licensed edition, 1973). Goodbody, 'Deutsche Ökolyrik', p. 391, cites Wolfgang Harich, *Kommunismus ohne Wachstum? Babeuf und der 'Club of Rome'* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1975).
60. See Mallinckrodt, *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR*, pp. 32-35; and the following articles in *Umweltprobleme und Umweltbewußtsein in der DDR*, edited by Redaktion Deutschland Archiv (Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1985): Gerhard Timm, 'Die offizielle Ökologiedebatte in der DDR', pp. 117-49; Hubertus Knabe, 'Gesellschaftlicher Dissens im Wandel: Ökologische Diskussionen und Umweltengagement in der DDR', pp. 169-99 (esp. pp. 170-71); Knabe, 'Zweifel an der Industrie-gesellschaft: Ökologische Kritik in der erzählenden DDR-

- Literatur', pp. 201-50 (esp. pp. 206-13).
61. Knabe, 'Zweifel an der Industriegesellschaft', p. 206, citing VII. *Schriftstellerkongress der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik: Protokoll (Arbeitsgruppen)* (Berlin, 1973), p. 252.
 62. 'Produktivkraft Poesie: Gespräch zwischen Erwin Strittmatter und Heinz Plavius', *ndl*, 21 (1973) 5, pp. 5-12 (p. 6).
 63. Jurij Brezan, 'Geschichten von Menschen in der Menschenwelt', *ndl*, 22 (1974) 4, pp. 15-28 (pp. 20-21).
 64. Ulrich Plenzdorf, *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973). The public debate around this work is summarised and commented upon by Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR* (1989), pp. 245-48.
 65. Wolf, 'Neue Lebensansichten eines Katers', 'Selbstversuch', *Unter den Linden*, pp. 61-96, 97-133 respectively.
 66. See Stephan, *Christa Wolf* (1979), p. 113.
 67. Strittmatter, *Die blaue Nachtigall* (1976), pp. 5-6, 56-57. Kunert, *Tagträume in Berlin und andernorts: Kleine Prosa, Erzählungen, Aufsätze* (Munich: Hanser, 1972), e.g. 'Entdeckungen', p. 14, 'Bericht', pp. 22-23, 'Eine Ente', pp. 261-65.
 68. Jurij Brezan, *Krabat oder Die Verwandlung der Welt* (Berlin: Neues Leben, 1976).

69. This story was previously included in Brezan's colloquium lecture of 1973, 'Geschichten von Menschen in der Menschenwelt', *ndl*, 22 (1974) 4, pp. 21-22.
70. Lucia Heine, for example, largely neglects questions of science and progress in her otherwise thorough criticism, 'Krabat oder Die Verwandlung der Welt', *SuF*, 29 (1977) 3, pp. 659-67. Klaus Jarmatz distinguishes between the pessimistic use of the genetics issue in bourgeois literature and Brezan's treatment, which shows that the key to human progress is a radically changed world; 'Neue Begegnungen mit Krabat', *Wochenpost*, 25 June 1976, reprinted in *Kritik* 76, edited by Eberhard Günther et al. (Halle/Saale: mdv, 1976), pp. 29-32.
71. Axel Schulze, *Das Gastmahl Balthasars: Erzählungen* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1973). Cited by Lehmann, 'Das erzählte Dorf', pp. 101, 102.
72. Gerhard Holtz-Baumert, *Der Wunderpilz* (Berlin, 1974). Cited by Knabe, 'Zweifel an der Industriegesellschaft', p. 207.
73. See Lehmann, 'Das erzählte Dorf', pp. 101-02. From the first half of the 1970s, Lehmann cites Gerti Tetzner's novel *Karen W.* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1975).
74. Jurij Koch, 'Landvermesser', *Der einsame Nepomuk*:

Erzählungen, second edition (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1980), pp. 6-55. Koch has informed me that this book was originally published in 1975.

75. Braun, 'Landwüst', 'Durchgearbeitete Landschaft', *Gegen die symmetrische Welt: Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), pp. 29-30, 34-35 respectively.
76. Schulze, 'Landnahme', in *Die eigene Stimme*, pp. 320-21 (p. 321). Braun's poem 'Die Industrie' contains an equally harsh assessment of industrial and social development, but even here Braun retains a positive vision of the future; *Gegen die symmetrische Welt*, pp. 23-25.
77. Czechowski, 'Motorradfahren', *Schafe und Sterne: Gedichte* (Halle/Saale: mdv, 1974), pp. 156-67.
78. Hartung, 'Neuere Naturlyrik in der DDR', pp. 186-87, raises the charge of escapism against Heinz Kahlau's 'Am Schwielowsee', *ndl*, 21 (1973) 6, pp.49-50; and Michael Franz's 'Märkischer See', *Anders kommen wir her* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1974), p. 40.
79. Kunert, 'An meine Leser', *Im weiteren Fortgang: Gedichte* (Munich: Hanser, 1974), p. 27.
80. Kirsten, 'dorf', *die erde bei Meissen*, p. 69 (published in *der bleibaum*, 1977).
81. Mickel, 'Mottek sagt', *Odysseus in Ithaka: Gedichte 1957-74* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1976), pp. 127-28, 138-39, 153 (see esp. section 1, p. 127, and section 5, pp. 138-39). The poem was previously published in

Eisenzeit (Halle/Saale: mdv, 1975).

82. Hanns Cibulka, 'Losgesprochen', *Losgesprochen: Gedichte* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1989), pp. 63-64; previously published in *Lichtschwalben: Gedichte* (Halle/Saale: mdv, 1973), p. 31.
83. Czechowski, 'Flußfahrt', *Schafe und Sterne*, pp. 129-31. Kirsten, 'der bleibaum', *die erde bei Meißen*, pp. 77-78 (published in *der bleibaum*).
84. Joseph Pischel, 'Das Verhältnis Mensch-Natur in der Selbstverständigung von Schriftstellern der DDR', *WB*, 22 (1976) 1, pp. 74-99.
85. The Biermann affair of 1976 and its consequences are described by Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR* (1989), pp. 249-58.
86. Renate Drenkow, 'Interview mit Jurij Koch', *WB*, 33 (1987) 11, pp. 1812-19 (p. 1813).
87. From a personal interview with Koch, 23 May 1989. 'Landvermesser' was in fact performed again in 1977 in Bautzen, albeit in the minority Sorbian language. It did not appear on the East German stage again until 1985, once more in Halle. Drenkow, 'Sprechen und auf der Stelle verstanden werden! Der Schriftsteller Jurij Koch', *WB*, 33 (1987) 11, pp. 1820-34 (pp. 1829-30).
88. See Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR* (1989), pp. 269-81.

89. Wolf, *Kein Ort. Nirgends* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1979). Heiner Müller, *Leben Gundlings Friedrich von Preußen Lessings Schlaf Traum Schrei* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren, 1982); previously published in *Die Schlacht, Traktor, Leben Gundlings* [...] (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1977). Müller, *Die Hamletmaschine*, in *Mauser* (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1978), pp. 89-97.
90. Horst Paucke and Adolf Bauer, *Umweltprobleme - Herausforderung der Menschheit* (Berlin: Dietz, 1979). The above paragraph draws on Mallinckrodt, *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR*, pp. 35-36, 38-39, 44. See also the articles cited in note 60 above.
91. Hansjörg Schneider, 'Gespräch mit Jurij Brezan', *SuF*, 31 (1979) 5, pp. 995-1012 (pp. 1006-07). Sigrid Damm, 'Interview mit Gerhard Holtz-Baumert', *WB*, 25 (1979) 4, pp. 85-107 (pp. 91-92).
92. Kunert, 'Antäus', *SuF*, 31 (1979) 2, pp. 403-08 (p. 403).
93. 'Um ein Wort: Ein Briefwechsel', *SuF*, 31 (1979) 2, pp. 409-11. 'Anlässlich Ritsos: Ein Briefwechsel zwischen Günter Kunert und Wilhelm Girnus', *SuF*, 31 (1979) 4, pp. 850-64.
94. Jürgen Hauschke, '"Fachlektor" kontra Brezan oder Schwierigkeiten mit Krabat', *SuF*, 37 (1985) 2, pp. 420-28 (p. 423). The quotation above is in

Hauschke's words.

95. Schneider, 'Gespräch mit Jurij Brezan', *SuF*, 31 (1979) 5, p. 1006.
96. Rainer Kirsch, 'Der Verhaltensforscher Professor Tembrock', in *Windvogelviereck: Schriftsteller über Wissenschaften und Wissenschaftler*, edited by John Erpenbeck (Berlin: Der Morgen, 1987), pp. 204-32. Previously published in *Kopien nach Originalen* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1978).
97. Dieter Noll, *Kippenberg: Roman* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1979), p. 150. Cited by Eckart Förtsch, 'Literatur als Wissenschaftskritik', in *Lebensbedingungen in der DDR: Siebzehnte Tagung zum Stand der DDR-Forschung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 12. bis 15. Juni 1984* (Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, Edition Deutschland Archiv, 1984), pp. 157-68 (pp. 159-61); and by Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR* (1989), p. 304.
98. In 'Zweifel an der Industriegesellschaft', pp. 214-16, 247-48, Knabe cites many such educationally oriented works for children, including several published in the 1976-79 period: Wolf Spillner, *Die Vogelinsel* (Berlin, 1976); Spillner, *Gänse überm Reiherberg* (Berlin, 1977); Spillner, *Der Bachstelzenorden* (Berlin, 1979); Bernd Wolff, *Biberspur* (Berlin, 1979).

99. Edith Anderson, *Der Klappwald* (Berlin, 1978). Cited by Knabe, 'Zweifel an der Industriegesellschaft', p. 215.
100. Monika Maron, *Flugasche: Roman* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1981). See Ria Endres, 'Schwierig: Umgang mit Wirklichkeit: Monika Marons Roman "Flugasche"', *Die Zeit*, 1981, no. 16.
101. Claus B. Schröder, *In meines Großvaters Kinderwald: Ein Report* (Halle-Leipzig, 1978). Cited by Knabe, 'Zweifel an der Industriegesellschaft', pp. 204, 216, 229, 232, 237, 242-43.
102. Marianne Bruns, *Der grüne Zweig: Kurzroman* (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1979). On the use of the Flood motif in GDR environmental literature, see chapter 4, section 5 of this thesis and Wolfgang Ertl, 'Sintflut und Apokalypse: Überlegungen zur Umweltlyrik in der DDR und BRD', in *GDR: Individual and Society*, edited by Ingrid K.J. Williams (Ealing: Ealing College of HE, 1987), pp. 79-90.
103. Kirsten, *der bleibaum: gedichte* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1977). This book contains the environmentally critical poems 'eisgang', p. 23, 'der bleibaum', p. 24, 'die straße', p. 25, 'besichtigung einer bergstadt', p. 43, and 'dorf', pp. 66-67.
104. Kirsten, editor, *Veränderte Landschaft: Gedichte* (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1979). Schulze, 'Landnahme', pp. 55-56; Roland Erb, 'Undine der

- Elsteraue', p. 60; Ulrich Berkes, 'Der ascheberg', p. 62 (previously published in *Ikarus über der Stadt*, Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1976); Lorenc, 'Die Struga', pp. 76-77.
105. Ursula Heukenkamp, 'Landschaften: Anmerkungen zu einer Lyrik-Anthologie', *Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, 2 (1980) 3, pp. 337-41 (p. 339).
106. Kirsten, 'nebelabend', *die erde bei Meissen*, p. 91.
107. Kirsten, 'Christian Wagner', *die erde bei Meissen*, pp. 96-97 (p. 97).
108. Kunert, 'Lagebericht', *Warnung vor Spiegeln, Unterwegs nach Utopia, Abtötungsverfahren: Gedichte* (Munich: dtv, 1982), p. 119. *Unterwegs nach Utopia*, which contains this poem, was published in the Federal Republic in 1977 and in the GDR in 1980.
109. Braun, 'Das Forum', 'Neuer Zweck der Armee Hadrians', 'Macchu Pichu', *Training des aufrechten Gangs: Gedichte* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1979), pp. 28-29, 30-31, 32-33 respectively.
110. On the ecology debate of the 1980s, see Mallinckrodt, *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR*, pp. 46-54, 89-144; and the articles cited in note 60 above. The protests after the Chernobyl disaster are described by Mallinckrodt in *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR*, pp. 135-39, and by Peter Wensierski in *Ökologische Probleme und Kritik an der*

Industriegesellschaft in der DDR heute (Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1988), pp. 315-21.

111. See Wensierski, 'Die Gesellschaft für Natur und Umwelt: Kleine Innovation in der politischen Kultur der DDR', in *Umweltprobleme und Umweltbewußtsein in der DDR*, pp. 151-68.
112. Mallinckrodt, *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR*, pp. 110-13, 125, 136 etc.
113. Quoted by Jürgen Engler in his review of Pietraß's poetry volume *Spielball*, 'Spiel und Botschaft', *ndl*, 35 (1987) 8, pp. 145-48 (p. 145).
114. Reimar Gilsenbach, 'Diskussionsbeitrag auf dem IX. Schriftstellerkongreß', *ndl*, 31 (1983) 9, pp. 86-91.
115. Gilsenbach, *Rund um die Natur* (Berlin, 1982). Cited by Knabe, 'Zweifel an der Industriegesellschaft', pp. 221-22.
116. Pietraß, 'Vom Vergehen der Arten', in *Windvogelviereck*, pp. 128-43.
117. References to Koch's essays are given in chapter 2, note 3.
118. Brezan, 'Feldwege', *ndl*, 37 (1989) 1, pp. 5-9.
119. Jürgen Hauschke, '"Fachlektor" kontra Brezan oder Schwierigkeiten mit Krabat', *SuF*, 37 (1985) 2, pp. 420-28 (p. 422), names: an information booklet from the adult education society 'Urania' (1980); the Seventh Kühlungsborn Colloquium (published as *Genetic Engineering und der Mensch*, edited by Werner

Scheler and Erhard Geißler, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1981; see pp. 17-19); *Biologie in der Schule* (1981) 7-8; *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* (1982) 3. Further criticism was expressed by the philosopher Hermann Ley in his article 'Über die Schwierigkeit der Wirklichkeitsbewältigung', *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* (1982) 2, pp. 234-47.

120. 'Briefwechsel zwischen Erhard Geißler und Jurij Brezan', *SuF*, 32 (1980) 5, pp. 1110-13.
121. The further contributions are: Hans Mottek, 'Zum Briefwechsel zwischen Erhard Geißler und Jurij Brezan', *SuF*, 33 (1981) 1, pp. 210-11; Geißler, 'Bruder Frankenstein oder - Pflegefälle aus der Retorte?', *SuF*, 36 (1984) 6, pp. 1289-1319 (see chapter 2, section 5 of this thesis for the origins of Geißler's article); Werner Creutziger, 'Brief an Erhard Geißler', *SuF*, 37 (1985) 2, pp. 416-20; Jürgen Hauschke, '"Fachlektor" kontra Brezan oder Schwierigkeiten mit Krabat', *SuF*, 37 (1985) 2, pp. 420-28; Manfred Wolter, 'Entwarnung?', *SuF*, 37 (1985) 2, pp. 428-30; Benno Müller-Hill, 'Kollege Mengele - nicht Bruder Eichmann', *SuF*, 37 (1985) 3, pp. 671-76; Karlheinz Lohs, 'Zuschrift an Erhard Geißler', *SuF*, 37 (1985) 4, pp. 903-04; Anna M. Wobus, 'Zuschrift an Erhard Geißler', *SuF*, 37 (1985) 6, pp. 1326-29; Geißler, 'Frankensteins Tod -

- Bemerkungen zu einer Diskussion', *SuF*, 38 (1986) 1, pp. 158-77.
122. Extracts from the discussion were published under the title 'Gaterslebener Begegnung' in *spectrum*, 18 (1987) 2, pp. 25-28, and in no. 3, pp. 16-21.
123. John Erpenbeck, editor, *Windvogelviereck: Schriftsteller über Wissenschaften und Wissenschaftler* (Berlin: Der Morgen, 1987).
124. It was not until 1981 that Brezan's critique of progress in *Krabat* (1976) received a full and fair exposition in Horst Nalewski's study 'Parabel und Reflexion: Zu zwei Aspekten des Romans "Krabat oder Die Verwandlung der Welt" von Jurij Brezan', in *Selbsterfahrung als Welterfahrung: DDR-Literatur in den siebziger Jahren*, edited by Horst Nalewski and Klaus Schuhmann (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1981), pp. 66-82.
125. *UM WELT*, *ndl*, 37 (1989) 11.
126. Cibulka, *Swantow: Die Aufzeichnungen des Andreas Flemming* (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1982).
127. Cibulka, 'Swantow', *ndl*, 29 (1981) 4, pp. 23-52.
128. Mallinckrodt, *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR*, pp. 64-67, 165. Mallinckrodt has made a thorough case study of *Swantow* and its reception in this book, pp. 59-87.
129. Mallinckrodt gives a detailed comparison of the two versions in *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR*,

pp. 69-85.

130. Mallinckrodt, *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR*, pp. 93-95, 101-03, 114-15.
131. Wolf, *Kassandra: Erzählung* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1983, 1986). Associated with this are the four essays entitled *Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung: Kassandra: Frankfurter Poetik-Vorlesungen* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1983). Irmtraud Morgner, *Amanda: Ein Hexenroman* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1983).
132. See Eva Kaufmann, 'Interview mit Irmtraud Morgner', *WB*, 30 (1984) 9, pp. 1494-1514 (p. 1497).
133. Brezan, 'Der Staunemann', *Erzählungen* (Berlin, 1987), pp. 240-46. Previously published in *Der Brautschmuck und andere Geschichten* (Berlin, 1980).
134. Franz Fühmann, *Saiäns-Fiktschen: Erzählungen* (Rostock: Hinstorff, 1981).
135. Eberhard Panitz, 'Eiszeit', *ndl*, 31 (1983) 7, pp. 5-34.
136. Wolf, *Störfall: Nachrichten eines Tages* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1987).
137. Helga Königsdorf, *Respektloser Umgang: Erzählung* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1986, 1988).
138. Lehmann, 'Das erzählte Dorf', p. 101, cites from this period Armin Stolper's *Geschichten aus dem Giebelzimmer* (Rostock, 1983) and Armin Müller's *Der*

Magdalenenbaum (Rudolstadt, 1980).

139. Holtz-Baumert, 'Die Hecke', *Erscheinen Pflicht* (Berlin, 1981). Cited by Knabe, 'Zweifel an der Industriegesellschaft', pp. 216, 234, 236.
140. Joachim Nowotny, *Abschiedsdisco* (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1980). Nowotny, *Letzter Auftritt der Komparsen: Novelle* (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1981).
141. Koch, *Der Kirschbaum: Novelle* (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1984).
142. Lia Pirskawetz, *Der Stille Grund: Roman* (Berlin: Neues Leben, 1985).
143. Brezan, *Bild des Vaters: Roman* (Berlin: Neues Leben, 1982). Matthias Körner, *Die Totenkeule: Roman* (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1988).
144. Czechowski, 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet', *Was mich betrifft: Gedichte* (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1981), pp. 76-77.
145. Pietraß, 'Freies Feld', *Freiheitsmuseum: Gedichte* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1982), p. 60.
146. Lorenc, 'Dorfbegräbnis', *Wortland: Gedichte* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1984), p. 40.
147. Walter Werner, 'Umwelt', *Der Baum wächst durchs Gebirge: Gedichte* (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1982), p. 31. Czechowski, 'Spaziergang', *Kein näheres Zeichen: Gedichte* (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1987), p. 159.
148. Pietraß, 'Auwald', 'Spielball', *Spielball: Gedichte* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1987), pp. 10, 79-80

respectively.

149. Cibulka, 'Lagebericht', *Losgespröchen*, pp. 81-87 (p. 82). This is the expanded version of 1986 which includes the additional sections V and VII.
150. Braun, 'Material V: Burghammer', *Langsamer knirschender Morgen: Gedichte* (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1987), pp. 33-36. Braun, 'Die Megamaschine', in 'Gedichte', *SuF*, 40 (1988) 4, pp. 743-47 (pp. 744-46).
151. Kirsten, 'lebensspuren', *die erde bei Meißen*, p. 106. Kirsten, 'veilchenzeit', in 'Landschaft mit Schweifkuppeln', *ndl*, 37 (1989) 8, pp. 48-57 (pp. 54-55).
152. Czechowski, 'In den Ruinenstädten des zweiten Weltkriegs', *Kein näheres Zeichen*, p. 158.
153. Braun, 'Nun bin ich froh', *Langsamer knirschender Morgen*, p. 30.
154. Cibulka, 'Lagebericht', *Losgespröchen*, p. 87.

Chapter 2 - Essayistic prose

1. Introduction

As we saw in the previous chapter, writers' speeches, public statements and essays played an important role in the East German environmental debate of the 1970s and 1980s. While in the Seventies these were mostly rather general warnings about man's place in nature, in the Eighties writers made more specific and better-informed statements, starting with Günter Kunert's letters to *Sinn und Form* in 1979.

After an attempt to define 'essayistic prose', in this chapter essays and speeches by the authors covered in chapters 3 and 4 will be examined as examples of the intensifying debate of the Eighties, as representing one literary treatment of environmental issues and as elucidating the authors' other work.

The German essay is defined by Ludwig Rohner as:

ein kürzeres, geschlossenes, verhältnismäßig locker komponiertes Stück betrachtsamer Prosa, das in ästhetisch anspruchsvoller Form einen einzigen, inkommensurablen Gegenstand meist kritisch deutend umspielt [...]¹

This scholar really favours a particular educated and stylish essayistic tradition typified by Friedrich Schlegel. Although Richard Pietraß's essay 'Vom Vergehen der Arten' (1982/87) corresponds closely to Rohner's basic definition above with its refinements (synthetic procedure, virtuoso entertainment of the fictive partner-in-conversation), even in the ideal length of sixteen pages, I shall for practical purposes treat Rohner's definition as a theoretical model and extend the heading of 'essayistic prose' to cover adjacent genres: speeches, letters, reportages and treatises. In the committed type of essay, with which we are concerned here, the emphasis lies in serious criticism of the state of things rather than the diversion of the intellect. Essayists of this kind employ facts and opinions to present a case to the public and, especially under the socialist system, to the influential intellectual and political elite. They describe what is wrong, analyse the causes, assign blame and propose alternatives in a more direct way than is possible in prose fiction, drama or poetry, though not necessarily with lower aesthetic quality. The former radio journalist Koch overstates the case when he makes a firm distinction between his 'essayistic' and 'literary' work, apparently running essays together with journalism. His rationale for the separation, interestingly, links equally temporary private and public functions of essays:

Ja, die Essayistik betrachte ich als einen Teil meiner Selbstverständigung. Um mich einem Thema zu nähern, wie jetzt mit den ökologischen Problemen, mit denen ich mich im zunehmenden Maße beschäftige, halte ich es für wichtiger, es kurzbündig, sofort auf den Punkt gebracht, zu sagen. Das hat eine Art operativer Wirkung.² (1989)

Koch and Rohner coincidentally agree that the essay is subjective, but the latter's category of 'disinterest' (*Unbefangenheit*), has little place in the committed essay, and the committed essayist's 'sympathy' for his/her theme is more heartfelt than mere affection.

The texts will be examined in this chapter author by author with the local themes of Jurij Koch and Matthias Körner leading on to the more global view of Helga Königsdorf and Richard Pietraß. Koch is the most important environmental essayist of the four in terms of the vigour of his campaign to save the culture and landscape of the Lausitz. The essays 'Da sah ich sie liegen: schön unsere Dörfer' (1984), 'Gehversuche einer Landschaft' (1987) and 'Die Schmerzen der auslaufenden Art' (1989) contain his main arguments. Together with his other pertinent essays and speeches, which sometimes drew official responses, they show the debate advancing in the Eighties.³ Körner, a German Lausitz writer, presented a catalogue of environmental failings entitled

'Fragen eines schreibenden Abgeordneten' to a Writers' Union executive meeting on environmental questions in June 1989.⁴ Similar in content to Koch's essays, it is further proof of the tough policy disputes which preceded the revolution of that year. Helga Königsdorf's 'Das Prinzip Menschenwürde: Thesen für einen Vortrag' is contemporaneous, but this treatise on ethical standards for society operates on a higher, intellectual plane of discussion.⁵ 'Vom Vergehen der Arten', the poet Richard Pietraß's essay on the world problem of the ever-growing number of species dying out, is exceptional not only in its literary quality.⁶ Its appearance in 1987, after five years of suppression, demonstrates the expanding limits of the acceptable. The selected authors represent trends in the GDR environmental debate: Koch and Körner concern themselves with the lignite question like Jurij Brezan and Joachim Nowotny, and Koch and Brezan both display a Sorbian rural conservatism; Pietraß has a 'green' love of all life in common with Reimar Gilsenbach; Königsdorf shares the thorough, enlightened approach of the science-fiction writer Karlheinz Steinmüller.⁷ My selection of authors regrettably omits the dissentient Marxist critics of industrial society (Christa Wolf, Irmtraud Morgner, Volker Braun) and the pessimists (Günter Kunert). The latter label may be loosely applied to the other main poets treated in

chapter 4, Heinz Czechowski and Wulf Kirsten, who preferred to confine their environmental and other social criticisms to verse.⁸

2. The essays of JuriJ Koch

Koch worked as a radio reporter and editor from 1960-76, which he admits adversely affected his literary work⁹ but which may well have helped him to acquire his popular touch. The themes of village and landscape destruction had already been addressed in the short story 'Landvermesser' (1975) and the novella *Der Kirschbaum* (1984) when the essay 'Da sah ich sie liegen: schön unsere Dörfer' was published (also in 1984), which indicates that Koch's essays spring from the same source as his fictional works rather than acting as a preliminary for them. The text, clearly intended to provoke a response, had been presented to a Writers' Union executive meeting on the theme of 'Literatur und Heimat' earlier in 1984.¹⁰ This short, six-page plea for the preservation of village culture possesses Rohner's characteristics of loose structure, intellectual conversation, subjectivity and sympathy, but the topic is clearly of existential importance to the author, not chosen out of mere interest. The essay is motivated by

love for his people and region, from which the examples are drawn, although the delicate Sorbian national question and the criticism of industry are veiled by the ostensible village topic.

The essay is framed by an event from the life of an interesting historical character. This catches the reader's attention at the beginning and, in a slightly varied form, creates a satisfying conclusion. The character is the Sorbian peasant and autodidact writer Hanzo Nepila, who died in 1856, and a quotation from his works tells how he once climbed a tall spruce and looked down at his villages (hence the title). Koch can thus share in spirit the experience of his chosen predecessor and take stock of how the physical and social landscape has changed in the intervening years with the development of lignite mining.¹¹ The conclusion of Koch's examination adds a sobering, activating note to Nepila's naive sense that his world is self-evident, but the old view is not discarded.

Although he was at this time both an established writer and an SED member, Koch still insures himself against suspicions of hostility to progress by prefacing his criticism with affirmations of support for progress. 'Aber, was soll die Wehmut, diese Sentimentalität, die Melancholie des Poeten!' he writes with comic self-reproach, pointing to his own need for electric light

and heating when working (p. 169). The repeated protestations, which cannot be directed only at the *ndl*-reading public, become almost fawning: 'Nein, ich bin kein Don Quijote. Ich kämpfe nicht mit Windmühlen. Ich freue mich über die Umwandlung der Energie. Ich fahre gern Auto.' Such declarations were then necessary before one could start to ask 'die Frage nach dem Verhältnis von materiellem Gewinn und geistig-moralischem Verlust' (p. 170). Weighing-up can be a loyal form of criticism, generous towards the good side of its target like Strittmatter's 'plus and minus' (see pp. 24-25 above). But Koch does claim some professional autonomy by deriving the 'laments' of the 'artists' from 'die Ethik ihres Berufes, die ihnen permanenten Zweifel auferlegt' (p. 172).

The main part of the text argues for the protection of the still vital village way of life. A purely emotional appeal is made by the stories of people who have lost their homes to mining. More poetically, the 'soul' of the village is characterised by listing at length the phenomena of village life, such as 'der Polterabend und Schabernack, die Kutsche auf dem Dach, das ganze Dorf auf der Hochzeit, die Alten, die noch erzählen können [...]'. The list captures traditions and allows the reader to make his/her own picture out of common associations or memories of country life. Both this thumbnail sketch of a wedding and the culminating

passage, which traces the 'village' feeling back to its roots, convey associatively what is given a stricter fictional form in *Der Kirschbaum*:

der noch nicht entschiedene Kampf zwischen Märchen und Apparaten und die berechtigte Hoffnung, daß die Märchen siegen, die Kindheit, die hier noch Kindheit ist, das Muster, das damit gelegt wird fürs Leben, das andere, bessere Grunderlebnis [...] (p. 172)

The defence of this way of life leads to the formulation of bold political demands: the creation of new villages to replace those lost and equal rights for both the neglected village culture and the city culture that the authorities regard as superior. Although mixed with visions of utopian harmony, these demands amounted to a serious challenge to the officially highly valued housing policy and the SED's stated goal of approximating rural to urban living conditions. This had deep roots in the Marxist preference for the advanced industrial worker over the backward peasant.¹²

In spite of his progressive assurances, Koch's attempt to save the best of the past in the modern age is basically conservative. By asking where 'die Sehnsucht nach Idylle', 'die Renaissance alter Bräuche', 'die gestiegene Wirkung des mythischen Elements in der Kunst'

have come from, he condemns the spiritual impoverishment brought by the technological revolution and implies that a romantic return to nature, traditional values and myth is a remedy, if not a solution. This implicit programme is put into practice in *Der Kirschbaum*, which, as a work of fiction, can also be more critical of industrial development.

Three years later in 1987, 'Gehversuche einer Landschaft' expands upon one of the lesser points in 'Dasah ...', the unsatisfactory restoration of ruined landscape. This essay is built up more tautly and objectively on the contrast between the high standards of the past and the recklessness of the present. The former are exemplified by another distinctive character, Hermann Prince von Pückler-Muskau (1785-1871), the landowner, writer and landscape gardener of Schloß Branitz near Cottbus, who knew that '"Kultur des Bodens nicht nur pekuniären Nutzen, sondern auch einen wahren Kunstgenuß zu schaffen imstande ist"' (p. 879). The latter is revealed in the devastation that the author found on a visit to the Lausitzer Revier. The lyrical description of earth-moving as if it were the torture of a living body echoes Volker Braun's mining poem 'Durchgearbeitete Landschaft',¹³ but with an unambiguously negative value:

Durcheinandergewühlt sind die abgelagerten Lagen,

angezapft und ausgesaugt die Adern, ausgekohlt der erste Flöz, ans Licht gebracht und zu Licht gemacht die zerfaserten Stubben der subtropischen Mammutkämpfe [Mammutbäume] und Sumpfzypressen. Nun gehts an den zweiten Flöz [...] (p. 879)

This central, reporting part of the text gives factual evidence of the mistakes found by the author, including (again) the failure to plan for new villages, the loss of good soil, inadequate recultivation and the loss of groundwater from Branitz, which necessitates expensive countermeasures. The causes are located in pro-coal economic policies. All this injects real criticism into the affirmative tradition of the East German reportage and improves on the largely emotional argument of 'Da sah ...'.

The assessment of possible solutions shows similar progress beyond the defence of traditional values. It was unexceptional in the GDR to praise the Hungarians for their advanced recultivation techniques, more outspoken to mention that they spared settlements when mining, but novel (for Koch) to welcome an incipient change of consciousness in the GDR against the 'omnipotence of coal' (p. 881). A good case is made for seeking alternative values in the past at this juncture, Pückler teaching the validity of aesthetic alongside economic

needs and the ultimate unfathomability of nature. However, Koch still feels the need to distance himself from Pückler's sentimentality about trees, whether for political reasons or because nineteenth-century grandiloquence might displease today's readers. He even goes so far as to say, 'Wir brauchen keinen literarischen Aufruf zum Schutz des Waldes, wie er etwa 1953 in die Sowjetunion mit Leonows Roman "Der russische Wald" erscholl' (p. 882). The rather eccentric suggestion, updating Pückler's practice, that machines should be developed to transplant old trees into recultivated soil does show the growing interest of one prominent lay environmentalist in the redirection of technology.

In 1987-89 Koch again made several environmental speeches in literary fora. At the Tenth Writers' Congress in 1987 he reinforced his earlier arguments against the wasteful lignite industry, contrasting the hollow ceremony of a recent mine opening with the INF Treaty, which gave hope that mankind could collectively prevent ecological as well as nuclear destruction (the Treaty occasioned a homage to Gorbachev from Koch). A prominent feature of Koch's speech at the Writers' Congress (repeated at the Querfurt meeting of writers and artists in 1989) was now the championship of 'alternativische Lösungen, massenhafte technische Erfindungen, noch nicht gedachte abweichende verrückte

Entwürfe', especially in the field of energy production. On the next day the Environment Minister Hans Reichelt gave a dogmatic speech in reply, but was forced to leave by the writers' protests. Blaming capitalism for the exploitation of natural resources, Reichelt quoted facts and figures to prove that the GDR's 'other road' of intensive use was working successfully. Lignite would be used more and more efficiently and alternative resources utilised better and better.

At the executive meeting of the Writers' Union on 21 June 1989, Koch formally presented a proposal on behalf of the Aktiv 'Literatur und Umwelt' that Sorbian villages, above all those endangered by the Nochten mine near Weißwasser, should be protected from mining. This was published in *neue deutsche literatur* as 'Plädoyer für einen Archipel', together with a reply from the Minister of Coal and Energy, Dr Mitzinger, to Hermann Kant, President of the Writers' Union. Koch stresses the need to adapt technology to natural conditions rather than the other way round, but the mining is opposed principally on *ethnic* grounds: the importance of the dialect, the folklore and local personalities including Hanzo Nepila and Kito Lorenc. The loss of ethnic diversity may even be more serious than the loss of biological diversity:

Während zerstörte Oberflächenstrukturen der Erde

durch Urbarmachung und Rekultivierung als vom Menschen gestaltete akzeptable Landschaften zurückgegeben werden können, ist der Verlust der ethnischen Natur unwiderruflich. (p. 106)

Mitzinger emphasised the solid economic arguments for full exploitation, although the lack of political dogmatism in his reply probably did not reflect a changed government line. It would only cost 0.30 M/t to clear the surface and relocate the villagers as compared with an average of 10.00 M/t for all open-cast mines after the year 2000.

The Sorbian national question had already appeared undisguised in 'Die Schmerzen der auslaufenden Art', which Koch read to an international conference of theatre workers in Bautzen in 1988¹⁴ and which was published in *GDR Monitor* in 1989. In this accomplished reportage, a bird-watching trip to look for the *Blauracke* (European roller), almost extinct in the GDR, provides the basis for wide-ranging and markedly personal reflections on the threatened 'ethnische Art' of the Sorbs. The gist is that biological and ethnic minorities give the world colour, although only certain enthusiasts have recognised this so far (p. 60). A historical figure of world fame in the green movement has been chosen here, the American

Indian Chief Seattle, whose address to the US President in 1855 is quoted in extracts (pp. 62-63). But Koch's poetic symbolism obscures the clarity of the argument when 'der bunte Vogel Seattle' is identified, in a confusing way, with the Sorbs and the *Blauracke*. The *Leitmotiv* of the elusive bird, though, is an effective means of holding the reader's attention and linking the author's reflections to his report.

Koch goes further than before in identifying the source of the problem. This does not lie in technology itself, which can be accommodated to nature. Rather, 'der nützliche technische Geist' (a phrase used of Dürrenmatt's *Die Physiker*) is corrupted by people's love of power, which is expressed in political and economic priorities:

Die Störung geht immer von der machtbesessenen Dummheit aus, ihrem pathologischen Trieb, vorgeführt zu werden, eingesetzt, ausgeübt, von der Borniertheit des politischen Primats, die immer großkotzig und wichtigtuerisch daherkommt, von dem animalischen Protz, der sich immer im Geleitzug der menschlichen Kreativität befindet und hemmungslos versucht nach vorn zu kommen. (p. 61)

However, the example of *Der Kirschbaum*, discussed in chapter 3 below, shows that such a psychical but not

strictly psychological approach has its limitations.

While 'Gehversuche ...' registered a change in East German public consciousness, 'Die Schmerzen der auslaufenden Art' contends much more radically that mankind stands at a historic turning-point: the euphoria of ascent has ended in comprehensive doubt, and the new values are those of 'die große Zeit der Erhaltungen'. Just as the dream of the social philosophers, 'Alles sei gemeinsam', was realised in the October Revolution, so it is now high time for the dream of the 'Artenbewahrer' to commence, 'Alles, was ist, bleibe!' (p. 63). The SED member's adherence to a certain interpretation of progress contradicts the conservatism of the protector of species and peoples. Koch ascribes a special role in the 'age of preservation' to social, biological and ethnic minorities, who are especially sensitive to signs of 'disturbance'. This romantic conviction acquires undertones of irrational nationalism when the author uses biologicistic metaphors ('ethnische Art', 'Solidarität ist ein Teil unserer genetisch gesteuerten Bedürfnisse', p. 64) and claims extraordinary powers for his own group ('Wir besitzen ein drittes Auge', p. 64).

The essay 'Auf Kohle sitzen' (1990), which repeats much from the earlier texts, shows that the political 'Wende' of 1989-90 has done little to improve the

environmental problems. Although annual lignite production is gradually being reduced from 300 to 200 million tonnes (p. 103), the Cottbus *Bezirkstag* was dissolved before it could legislate to preserve the villages, and the gentlemen from the West German company Rheinbraun have confirmed the economic calculations of the old East German combine bosses:

So tauschen wir nicht nur unsere Währung ein in eine härtere, sondern auch die Gangart, die Borniertheit des eigenen politischen Primats in die elegantere Gnadenlosigkeit des Kapitals. (pp. 106-07)

The basic impulse of Koch's essays and speeches has been constant, the need to preserve his homeland with its villages, people and natural environment, but his more superficial respect for the ideology of progress and for SED policies increasingly gave way to disrespect. Towards the end of the Eighties the national interests of the Sorbs came into the foreground, while the author also acquired a global view of environmental and minority issues. Since then, Koch has examined the position of the Sorbs in the unified Germany in the as yet (1992) unpublished book *Jubel und Schmerz der Mandelkrähe: Ein Report aus der sorbischen Lausitz* (*Mandelkrähe* = *Blauracke*).¹⁵

3. Matthias Körner, 'Fragen eines schreibenden Abgeordneten'

This speech was presented to the same Writers' Union meeting of June 1989 as Koch's 'Plädoyer für einen Archipel', effectively in support of Koch's proposals. I shall cite the extract published in *neue deutsche literatur* in November 1989,¹⁶ corresponding to the middle five pages of the original ten, as well as the original (indicated by the abbreviation 'FesA') where necessary. The vehemence of the published section makes censorship an unlikely reason for the cut, although the author's political motivation is explained more clearly in the omitted opening and conclusion.

This is a polemical speech rather than an essay in the strict sense. The environmental critique is conducted in a brusque, angry tone, with many pithy statements and searching questions directed at the audience, but without the 'sympathy' for the material, reflection and imagination-promoting conversationality which even Koch shows in his essays. The folksiness that softens the similar critique in *Die Totenkeule* is much reduced. This speech is based more narrowly than Koch's essays on personal testimony and factual examples from the author's experience as a *Kreistag* councillor (belonging to the DBD, the farmers' party). The form and

content suggest that it was written for the time and place of its delivery, without literary pretensions.

Körner speaks as a popular representative who no longer believes that he can improve socialism in that function. Environmental problems are traced back to the undemocratic mechanisms of the state, which contrast sharply with professed socialist principles: 'Der Staat ist dann stark, wenn die Massen alles wissen, über alles urteilen können und alles bewußt tun, sagt Lenin' ('FesA', p. 1), or from the GDR constitution 'Arbeite mit - Plane mit - Regiere mit' (p. 34).

Like Koch, Körner criticises economic mistakes and false priorities (using similar examples to those in 'Gehversuche ...'), but his inside political experience allows him to describe politico-economic connections in greater, if duller, detail, and to expose official secrecy. Thus the author juxtaposes the official justification for the planned, environmentally destructive Zeiðholz Ost lignite mine - the safeguarding of jobs and the coal supply for the local briquette factories - with unpleasant realities: obsolete, polluting factories which are only kept open to win foreign exchange, and the secret notification of councillors about future plans. Against this economic secretiveness, Körner pleads on behalf of his electors for openness about the full present and future societal

cost of lignite, for 'Der Preis an Menschlichkeit ist da noch immer unberücksichtigt' (p. 35).

As also in *Die Totenkeule*, the mistrust between the ruled and their unaccountable rulers is seen as the chief social problem of the GDR. This is a different perspective from that of Koch, who criticises policies and institutions from the elevated viewpoint of an established writer. The dangers of an unaccountable executive are demonstrated by the incident when the early opening of the Zeißholz Ost mine was revealed in confidence to councillors by a 'demonic bureaucrat' who shrugged his shoulders over the human dimension of his work ('FesA', pp. 2-3), and by the equally shocking case of the *Bezirkstag's* powerlessness to stop pollution from the Schwarze Pumpe gas plant (p. 37). Attention is also paid to the effects that the lack of trust has on people's consciousness, both that of bureaucrats who need feel no responsibility, although 'das Prinzip Verantwortung' has become essential for human survival ('FesA', p. 2),¹⁷ and that of citizens who, for example, are prevented from entering the local forests by over-strict fire regulations and consequently lose their respect for the forest, dumping their rubbish there. Environmental degradation is one ill effect of the state's tutelary treatment of its citizens:

Was wird aus dem Wald, wenn wir die Bindungen zum

Wald wegadministrieren? Ich konnte als Abgeordneter gegen die Verordnung nichts ausrichten. Ich meine, mit der Entmündigung des Bürgers nimmt dessen Verantwortungsbewußtsein ab. (p. 36)

Even as late as June 1989, such outspokenness could provoke reprisals. According to Körner, the response of the Environment Minister, who was present at the meeting, was to classify the writer as a 'counter-revolutionary' and to institute 'measures' against him.¹⁸ The limits of debate had been greatly extended by the eve of the state's dissolution, but what Körner calls the 'Erhaltungsmechanismus der Macht' remained on guard.

4. Helga Königsdorf, 'Das Prinzip Menschenwürde'

Helga Königsdorf was one of the main contributors to the debate on the GDR's future from the autumn of 1989 to the spring of 1990.¹⁹ 'Das Prinzip Menschenwürde' belongs to the vanguard, the calls for a new orientation issued by intellectuals including the 'Literatur und Umwelt' group in the summer and early autumn of 1989 when the old power structures were still intact. Although the *ndI* version was not published until October 1989, this was an

expansion of a text published in June in *Die Weltbühne*.²⁰ The *ndl* text itself seems to have been provisional in character, accompanied by the explanatory note: 'Thesen für einen Vortrag, den die Autorin im November dieses Jahres im Bezirksverband Berlin des Schriftstellerverbandes halten wird'.²¹

This treatise avoids the authorial subjectivity, appeals to an addressee, particularity in detail and concreteness which mark the texts studied so far and Königsdorf's fictional work *Respektloser Umgang* (1986). Instead, it is an objective, general and abstract exposition of the individual humanist ethics which are expressed in the life and thoughts of that book's narrator. The form, nine numbered 'Thesen' made up of short, sober, rather aphoristic sentences, is similar to but more rigorous than that of *Respektloser Umgang*. It is as if the mathematician rather than the artist were speaking.

Königsdorf's premise is that the 'scientific-technological revolution' has undergone a dangerous qualitative leap. The war-centred analysis of global problems in *Respektloser Umgang* is redressed by the explicit recognition that ecological damage and rising population figures are just as serious (p. 5). Like Koch, she sees the need for renewed reflection on values and standards, but his romantic liking for old wisdom and 'crazy' solutions contrasts sharply with her

rationalistic proposal of ethical guidelines for human actions, taking into account future risks and the extra-human world. This is, though, a *cultural* enterprise in which literature has 'enlightening functions' to perform in a situation of helplessness (p. 10). Königsdorf distinguishes herself crucially from 'greens' (like Pietraß), who revere the earth and all its creatures, by placing the human being in the centre of her philosophy:

Die Forderung, der Mensch solle sich bescheiden und wieder als Teil der Natur verstehen, ist sympathisch, aber unrealistisch [for things have gone too far ...]. Eher tut Unbescheidenheit not. Der Mensch sollte unbescheiden genug sein, sich auf seine Würde zu besinnen. Und es ist kein Zeichen von Würde, wenn sich einer den Ast absägt, auf dem er sitzt, oder wenn er mit anderen Kreaturen brutal oder mit sich nicht sorgfältig umgeht. (p. 7)

In this scheme of things the extra-human world is subsidiary to 'human dignity', which takes the place of Ernst Bloch's 'hope' (*Das Prinzip Hoffnung*) and Hans Jonas's 'responsibility' (*Das Prinzip Verantwortung*). This is not so different from the official Marxist view expounded in Karlheinz Lohs's and Sonnhild Döring's book *Im Mittelpunkt der Mensch: Umweltgestaltung* -

Umweltschutz (1975),²² but Königsdorf's humanism has much greater respect for individual judgement and individual life.

Common fictional criticisms of industrial and particularly East German society are restated in general, ethical terms. The effects of economic rationality on individuals and societies are examined with precision, but the interplay of economic and ecological factors, to which Koch and Körner pay deserved attention, is neglected. However, the proposal of the 'Fragenkatalog "Menschenwürde"' as the measure of whether an economic development amounts to 'progress' is a novel, exact contribution to the progress debate (p. 8). Moreover, the politico-economic criticisms made by Körner and Koch closely match Königsdorf's ethically based desiderata: the consideration of risks in economic management (for which a separation of powers is necessary), a transparent interplay between political structures and individuals, and informed and responsible citizens (pp. 9-10). These demands with global pretensions, made more briefly in *Die Weltbühne*, were part of the consensus of reformist intellectuals.

Königsdorf, a mathematician and ex-physicist, also applies ethical principles to science, stressing the danger of unchecked scientific-technological progress, e.g. the objectification of individuals by genome mapping. The adaptation of a passage from *Respektloser*

Umgang reveals that her assessment of science sobered considerably between 1986 and 1989. In the original, the autobiographical narrator figure insists in spite of the warning of Hiroshima that science is indispensable in a materially limited world:

Keinesfalls werde ich sagen, Wissenschaft verbiete sich von jetzt an. Gefährlich ist der Mythos, wir könnten mit ihrer Hilfe getrost jede Suppe auslöffeln, die wir uns einbrocken. Das Warten auf Wunder. Aber gefährlicher ist der Glaube, wir kämen ohne neue Erkenntnis aus.²³

Science is the alternative to fighting over resources, a 'good compass' for the passage between Scylla and Charybdis. This metaphor is retained in 'Das Prinzip Menschenwürde', but the trust in science as the supreme guide is given up, possibly after the further lesson of Chernobyl:

Ohne Wissenschaft säßen wir in einem Boot ohne Kompaß. Aber es ist vielleicht der gefährlichste Mythos unseres Jahrhunderts: Wir können mit Hilfe der Wissenschaft jede Suppe auslöffeln, die wir uns einbrocken. Das ist deshalb so gefährlich, weil es die Dringlichkeit allseitigen gesellschaftlichen

Handeln verdeckt. (p. 9)

The author's conclusion that we must rethink what kind of science we need follows pointers in *Respektloser Umgang* and echoes earlier opinions of Cibulka, Morgner and Wolf.

Although a late text, 'Das Prinzip Menschenwürde' still demonstrates the spread of environmental consciousness among GDR writers. None of Königsdorf's short stories from the late Seventies and Eighties has this subject-matter,²⁴ and *Respektloser Umgang* focuses on nuclear weapons as the greatest symptom of industrial society's illness. Yet here the lingering bias towards science and technology is discarded, their ecological effects are at least acknowledged and they are subjected to a strict ethical examination with much less ambiguity than the fiction. In a further radicalisation of her thought, Königsdorf was in 1991 to issue more urgent calls for an environmental reorientation of science, technology and especially economic systems, for 'Die Grenzen des Wachstums sind erreicht'.²⁵

5. Richard Pietraß, 'Vom Vergehen der Arten'

Pietraß shows signs of environmental awareness in his work long before Königsdorf, starting with the poem

'Der Ringende' (written 1979) and a brief explanatory note on the blue whale in the poetry volume *Notausgang* (1980). The theme spreads and develops further in *Freiheitsmuseum* (1982) and *Spielball* (1987), persisting in the new poems of *Weltkind* (1990).²⁶ 'Vom Vergehen der Arten' (1982) marks the crucial upturn in this process. Here I shall consider first of all the origin of the essay, its character and thematic structure, its for the time radical content, the publishing history and the reception.

Pietraß was commissioned by Paul Wiens, editor-in-chief of *Sinn und Form*, to write about the 1981 Kühlungsborn Colloquium, a biennial conference on the ethics of the modern life sciences which that year bore the title 'Darwin Today'.²⁷ According to the author, almost all of the scientific speakers attempted to confirm Darwin's theory with modern findings, but his own thoughts wandered along a different track: what would concern Darwin were he alive today? The answer: 'Das Vergehen der Arten' instead of *Die Entstehung der Arten*. The article which Pietraß (a psychologist by training) did write reflected a changed view of life: 'Die Beschäftigung mit Darwin hat mein Weltbild biozentrisch gemacht: nur die Mitbewahrung der gesamten Natur kann die Zukunft sichern.'²⁸

The exemplary character of this essay has already

been mentioned in the introduction to the chapter. Although he is clearly committed to the environmental cause, Pietraß allows his wit freer reign than the others to 'play about' the 'incommensurable' (fundamentally indescribable) subject-matter. He thus displays a degree of 'disinterest' as well as sympathy for his material and a subjectivity which pervades the derivative material as well as his reporting on the conference and his direct reflections. The central idea, a warning of our headlong rush into catastrophe, recurs throughout the lesser topics, which are carefully varied among three sections so as to retain interest: the reality of extinction in the first; the historical reference figure Darwin, the conference and various scientific matters in the second; conflict between man and other species in the third.

Maybe reflecting metropolitan attitudes, Pietraß proceeds from the global extinction crisis to the local situation, the reverse of Koch's direction in 'Die Schmerzen der auslaufenden Art'. The global example is understandably the tropical rainforests, where the loss is most severe and which have a romantic appeal evidenced by the brief portrait of a defiant chieftain from New Guinea. Although the condemnation of certain multinational corporations for destroying the forest must have been politically welcome, the emphasis of the essay lies on common human responsibility. The evenhandedness with which attention is paid to extinctions

both at home and abroad in the capitalist world must have been contentious.

The local example is a list of ninety plants extinct or threatened in Berlin and Brandenburg (pp. 130-31)²⁹, which is balanced by sixty birds endangered in the Federal Republic (p. 142). The author has made a poetic memorial out of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's *Red Lists*, which enumerate disappeared and disappearing species 'In einer Begrifflichkeit, die jener der Gefallenen- und Vermisstenanzeigen beider Weltkriege nicht nachsteht' (p. 128). The list of extinct plant species begins:

durchstoßen der *Nördliche Mannsschild*, zerschlissen
der *Verwandte Frauenmantel*, zerschellt die
Schwedische Schmalwand, vergiftet das *Rotbraune
Quellried*, für immer langgezogen das *Salz-Hasenohr*,
abgegeben der *Herzlöffel*, zerfressen die *Öhrchen-
Gänsekresse*, ausgerissen die *Grüne Hohlzunge*. (p.
130)

The names suggest rough or delicate beauty, dignity and comic nastiness, and the punning past participles the cruelty with which people have dispatched them. The source of the technique, also employed in the poem 'Spielball'³⁰, is doubtless Kirsten's elegiac poem

'werktätig', written in 1975, which lists obsolete crafts in the form of infinitive phrases.³¹

The lists of the 'fallen' support a strong moral case against our reckless destruction of wild species. The identification of 'unser scheuklappiges Streben nach Wohlleben' (p. 131) as the cause of this, and the specific condemnation of harmful agricultural and industrial practices, are a clear challenge to policies of economic growth and industrialisation. The writer's green morality is of a radical kind:

Gibt es außer der Solidarität von Mensch zu Mensch nicht auch die von Mensch zu Tier, von Mensch zu Pflanze? Sind sie nicht auch in unsere Verantwortlichkeit eingeschlossen? [...] Muß mit Stumpf und Stiel aktiv oder nebenwirkend ausgerottet werden, was uns nicht vordergründig nützt? Was legitimiert uns dazu? Unser schwindelerregend entwickeltes, wahnwitziges Hirn? (p. 132)

This sympathy with other species, rejecting human 'speciesism', conflicts fundamentally with the Marxist anthropocentrism which was then the official dogma.³² It closely resembles Koch's espousal of species conservation, though the two writers have travelled by different routes and Koch's pronounced political views are alien to Pietraß's humanitarianism.

Pietraß shares the frequent literary ambivalence towards science, a source of both enlightenment and danger. On the one hand, like Wolf in *Störfall*, Pietraß uses scientific theories of evolution as a basis for speculation on human nature. While Wolf's interest in what human brain evolution means for our future contains an element of anthropocentrism, for Pietraß the exceptional evolutionary status of man, unspecialised, intelligent and highly adaptable, is not only a danger for himself but also for other, equally important species. The fascinating theme of the rat as the exception that proves the rule, the unusual animal which can adapt to the man-made world, will be analysed in detail in relation to Pietraß's poems in chapter 4, section 5 below.

On the other hand, Pietraß's suspicion that new biological techniques compromise human dignity and individuality is evident from the poems 'Homunculus' and 'Klon', written in 1980,³³ and from the treatment of in-vitro fertilisation and egg and sperm donation in the essay (pp. 137-38). The ironic way in which facts are recounted, with references to Huxley's *Brave New World*, makes it seem as if all attempts to stop the abuse of knowledge for eugenic purposes are futile. The author's tendentiousness serves him badly in this respect when compared with Königsdorf's reasoned argument about

science, but the rounded portrait of Darwin, who regretted late in life that he had let the artistic side of his character atrophy in forty years of monotonous scientific work (p. 135), indicates the desirability of a psychological balance. Manfred Wolter, another active participant in the art-science dialogue, significantly supplied the moral of this tale when quoting Darwin in a speech on scientific responsibility at the 1986 Gaterslebener Begegnung:

'Der Verlust der Empfänglichkeit für derartige Sachen [Poesie und Musik] ist ein Verlust an Glück und dürfte möglicherweise nachteilig für den Intellekt, noch wahrscheinlicher für den moralischen Charakter sein, da er den gemüthalt erregbaren Teil unserer Natur schwächt ...' ³⁴

Pietraß's attempt to correct the one-sidedness of science and other human enterprises has made his essay one-sided in (what was in the GDR) a politically unacceptable sense. The salient aspect of human progress is the increasing rate of man-made extinctions, on which Pietraß makes the concluding remark, 'Ich sehe uns in rasender Fahrt. Wer redet von Bremse?' (p. 143). This alarming message can easily sound like alarmism. There are no counterbalancing signs of hope, unambiguously positive sides of science or even nominal concessions to

a cultural establishment which wanted literature to transmit a positive image of science and progress.

According to Pietraß, the new editors of *Sinn und Form* after Wiens's death in 1982 proposed great changes to the text, making it optimistic and placing the blame on capitalism, while Erpenbeck was reluctant to include it in his anthology, *Windvogelviereck*. The author, who did not want his essay mutilated, proposed that a balancing text should be written by Erhard Geißler, the molecular biologist and populariser of science. As it turned out, Geißler's article, 'Bruder Frankenstein oder - Pflegefälle aus der Retorte?', appeared on its own in *Sinn und Form* in 1984.³⁵ In it, he upbraids writers who have expressed disquiet about modern genetics or biology, including Heinar Kipphardt, Juriž Brezan, Christa Wolf and Richard Pietraß for 'Klon' and 'Homunculus', and fluently counters their fears with facts. Direct references to the original essay seem to have been suppressed, but there are echoes in the general theme and certain details, including the apparent correction of one factual error.³⁶ The only open reference to Pietraß's ecological ideas treats the essay as if it were merely a spoken remark:

Denn nur wir Menschen haben es fertiggebracht,
Naturgesetze zu erkennen und zunehmend beherrschen

zu lernen - bis hin zu so störenden Eingriffen in die Ökosphäre, daß Richard Pietraß anlässlich des 1981er Kühlungsborner Kolloquiums über 'Darwin today' nicht zu Unrecht meinte, den 100. Todestag von Charles Darwin sollte man am besten mit einer Diskussion über das 'Vergehen der Arten' begehen. (p. 1303)

This tinge of pessimism in Geißler's optimistic essay has to be supported by a quotation from Engels.

The limited critical reception of 'Vom Vergehen der Arten', which was eventually published in Erpenbeck's *Windvogelviereck* in 1987, was positive and not as defensive as the editor himself had been in the afterword.³⁷ Erpenbeck characteristically emphasises the sound, factual basis to Pietraß's essay (p. 322) and defends it from the charge of pessimism:

Sein Beitrag hat, bei aller Düsternis, nicht den Charakter von Schwarzmalerei, sondern den eines Aufrufs, zu retten, was zu retten ist. Damit befindet er sich, wie erwähnt, in Übereinstimmung mit dem in der DDR gültigen Artenschutzgesetz und dem Bemühen zahlreicher engagierter Naturfreunde des Landes. (p. 346)

Horst Nalewski's review of *Windvogelviereck* in *Literatur*

'87 im Gespräch (1988), though, like that by Jürgen Engler in *ndI* (1988), is frankly sympathetic to Pietraß's 'extremely disturbing essay'.³⁸ While Erpenbeck demonstratively supports GDR state policy, Nalewski refuses to draw specious hope from the success of Soviet writers in helping to prevent the diversion of Siberian rivers. Quoting like Engler from the list of plants, he recognises that the literary author has an advantage over the popular scientific writer:

Hier ist's die Sprache des Dichters, die die bloße Mitteilung noch um einen Grad schmerzlicher, also eindringlicher, also haftbarer macht, machen möchte, was diesem Beitrag zusätzliche Qualität verleiht.
(p. 365)

The history of this text, from censorship by the journal editors in 1982 to the sympathetic critical response in 1988, demonstrates the increased leeway given to less famous writers by the cultural establishment and the growing acceptability even of grave environmental criticism.

6. Evaluation of the essayistic approach

Although the essays are not essential for an understanding of the authors' other work, they offer valuable insights into the developing ideas of Pietraß, Koch and Königsdorf. Viewed this way, they are secondary literature like interviews and other public statements. More relevant for an evaluation of the essayistic approach are the other two points raised at the beginning of this chapter, how environmental issues are treated in essays and what essays can say about the debate.

The committed essay was characterised in general terms in the introduction to this chapter. The essays and speeches of Koch, Körner and Pietraß (and Königsdorf's political essays) correspond to this model, in which the author's subjective opinions are expounded rationally and supported by a strong factual element. 'Das Prinzip Verantwortung', though, strives exceptionally for objectivity. The dryness of that treatise and the repetitiveness of 'Fragen eines schreibenden Abgeordneten' suggest that an essay needs something more than logic, arguments and facts in order to have public appeal. These elements can be made credible by the use of first-hand experience and palatable by classically 'essayistic' features: interesting points, associative technique, imagination, poetic colouring. 'Vom Vergehen

der Arten' and parts of Koch's essays thus attain literary merit, but Koch's essays also show the dangers of digression and fancy when writing about a serious subject. Essayists can use their own and others' experience to illustrate the individual and social dimensions of a problem, but the need to address a topic of a greater than human scale within a short form prevents them from achieving the full human depth of longer forms like the novel or more personal forms like the literary portrait or the *Tonbandprotokoll* (e.g. Gabriele Eckart's interviews with East German collective farmers in *So sehe ich die Sache*, 1984).³⁹ Regardless of their artistic value, the committed essay and close relations like Wolf's *Störfall* remain inseparable from their contemporary context.

We have seen how, in conjunction with other works by the same authors, these essays attest the steady radicalisation of East German writers in the course of the 1980s, at least in respect of ecology and progress. This change of consciousness of course affected individuals differently. My limited selection of authors further displays the ideological diversity typical of environmentalists in East and West. There is almost as much disagreement as agreement among Königsdorf's enlightened anthropocentrism, Koch's patriotically tinged conservationist care, Körner's practical commitment,

Pietraß's 'biocentrism' and the still more radical beliefs of, say, Wolf. The essays expose local abuses in the GDR (Körner and Koch) and draw global problems to the attention of the public, who may well have been unaware in the early 1980s (Pietraß and also Koch). However, Königsdorf in 1989, maybe addressing a limited group of *ndI* readers, does not feel the need to reiterate well-known facts when dealing with more abstract questions. The emphasis varies too when the causes are described: the immediate causes in industry and agriculture by Koch, Körner and Pietraß; the systemic reasons in economic and political structures by Körner, Koch and Königsdorf; and mistaken, technophilic values by the latter two. The writers in the sample all agree on the need for radical changes in consciousness and practice, but those with the most developed ideas for a solution, Koch and Königsdorf, represent opposing philosophies.

Essays were one of the means of publicising environmental facts and dissenting opinions in the absence of free media - perhaps one of the more elitist means. Like the censorship of *Swantow* and *Kassandra* - essayistic works rich in ideas - the suppression of 'Vom Vergehen der Arten' and the hostile official response to Koch's initiatives prove that the authorities took them seriously as challenges to the sanctity of progress, science and industry. Körner's and Königsdorf's contributions of 1989, however, did not affect the

interests of the already more tolerant state to the same degree as Koch's request to save the villages. By writing essays and making statements on matters of public concern, writers in Eastern and Western Europe have been able to exercise their special moral influence more directly, if less deeply, than through the main literary genres (compare Max Frisch's questioning of the sanctity of the Swiss army in *Schweiz ohne Armee*, 1989, and Günter Grass's long-standing opposition to German nationalism).⁴⁰

Notes to chapter 2

1. Ludwig Rohner, *Der deutsche Essay: Materialien zur Geschichte und Ästhetik einer literarischen Gattung* (Neuwied and Berlin: Luchterhand, 1966), p. 672.
2. Peter Barker, 'Interview mit Jurij Koch', *GDR Monitor*, no. 21 (Summer 1989), pp. 49-58 (p. 53).
3. Jurij Koch, 'Da sah ich sie liegen: schön unsere Dörfer', in *Positionen 1: Wortmeldungen zur DDR-Literatur*, edited by Eberhard Günther (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1984), pp. 169-74. Also published in *ndl*, 34 (1984) 10, pp. 38-42. Koch, 'Gehversuche einer Landschaft', *SuF*, 39 (1987) 4, pp. 878-82.

- Koch's speech at the Tenth Writers' Congress, *Sonntag*, 42 (1987) 49, p. 5. Koch, 'Die Schmerzen der auslaufenden Art', *GDR Monitor*, no. 21 (Summer 1989), pp. 59-65. Koch, 'Begegnung in Querfurt 22.-24.2.89: Ein Beitrag zur Umweltdiskussion: Etwas über verheerende Folgen sorglosen Daseins heiliger Kühe' (unpublished speech delivered to a 'Zusammenkunft von Schriftstellern und Künstlern' at Querfurt near Eisleben). Koch, 'Plädoyer für einen Archipel', *ndl*, 37 (1989) 11, pp. 101-08. Koch, 'Auf Kohle sitzen', *ndl*, 38 (1990) 9, pp. 101-07.
4. Unpublished in full, but an extract appeared under the title 'Von den Schwierigkeiten der Praxis', *ndl*, 37 (1989) 11, pp. 34-38.
 5. Helga Königsdorf, 'Das Prinzip Menschenwürde: Thesen für einen Vortrag', *ndl*, 37 (1989) 10, pp. 5-10.
 6. Richard Pietraß, 'Vom Vergehen der Arten', in *Windvogelviereck: Schriftsteller über Wissenschaften und Wissenschaftler*, edited by John Erpenbeck (Berlin: Der Morgen, 1987), pp. 128-43.
 7. E.g. Jurij Brezan, 'Feldwege', *ndl*, 37 (1989) 1, pp. 5-9. Joachim Nowotny, speech in *X. Schriftstellerkongreß der DDR: Arbeitsgruppen*, edited by Schriftstellerverband der DDR (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1989), pp. 127-32. Reimar Gilsenbach, speech at Ninth Writers' Congress, *ndl*, 31 (1983) 9, pp. 86-91. Karlheinz Steinmüller, speech in *X. Schrift-*

stellerkongreß der DDR, pp. 218-23.

8. This was true for Czechowski up to the autumn of 1989, but, like many other (former) GDR writers, he was moved to make political statements at the time of the East German revolution and German unification. See Heinz Czechowski, 'Euphorie und Katzenjammer', in *'Die Geschichte ist offen'. DDR 1990: Hoffnung auf eine neue Republik. Schriftsteller aus der DDR über die Zukunftschancen ihres Landes* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt/rororo aktuell, 1990), pp. 31-43; and Czechowski, 'Von der DDR nach Deutschland?', *ndl*, 39 (1991) 9, p. 51ff.
9. Barker, 'Interview mit Jurij Koch', *GDR Monitor*, no. 21 (Summer 1989), p. 52.
10. See Hermann Kant, 'Ein einfaches Wort', *ndl*, 32 (1984) 10, pp. 5-6.
11. From the mid-1970s, provoked mainly by rising prices for Soviet oil, the GDR began on a large scale to substitute domestic lignite for oil and gas as fuels. Raw lignite production stood at 246.7 million tonnes in 1975, 258.1 in 1980, a planned 304 in 1985 and 325 in 1990. 60.5% of production in 1985 was to come from the Lausitz field, where the landscape has been drastically reshaped by mining. More and more overburden and water was having to be removed per tonne of coal. The recultivation of

'devastated' areas declined in the GDR from the mid-Seventies onward and did not keep pace with the rate of new loss to mining. 70 settlements were wholly or partly evacuated between 1960 and 1980, while more than 120 places with a total population of 45,000 were to follow in the Cottbus area alone. See Peter Wensierski, *Ökologische Probleme und Kritik an der Industriegesellschaft in der DDR heute* (Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1988), pp. 10-26 (changes in the energy industry), 220-33 (ecological problems of lignite mining).

12. Engels wrote, 'The peasant has so far largely manifested himself as a factor of political power only by his apathy, which has its roots in the isolation of rustic life.' Frederick Engels, 'The Peasant Question in France and Germany' (written 1894), in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, vol. XXVII, *Engels: 1890-95* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), pp. 481-502 (p. 483). The 1976 Programme of the SED gave as one of the goals of socialism 'die Lebensbedingungen des Dorfes denen der Stadt anzunähern, um die wesentlichen Unterschiede zwischen Stadt und Land allmählich zu überwinden'. *Protokoll des IX. Parteitages der SED* (Berlin: Dietz, 1976), p. 228.
13. Braun wrote, probably still praising the heroism of work:

Hier lagen die Bäume verendet, mit nackten
Wurzeln, der Sand durchlöchert bis in die Adern
Und ausgepumpt, umzingelt der blühende Staub

[...]

Ausgelöffelt die weichen Lager, zerhackt,
verschüttet,
zersiebt, das Unterste gekehrt nach oben und
durch-
gewalkt und entseelt und zerklüftet alles

Volker Braun, *Gegen die symmetrische Welt: Gedichte*
(Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), pp. 34-35.

14. Barker, 'Interview mit Jurij Koch', *GDR Monitor*, no. 21 (Summer 1989), p. 50.
15. A montage of excerpts from this was published under the title 'Horka an einem Tag im Mai' in *ndI*, 40 (1992) 7, pp. 87-99.
16. See note 4 above.
17. An apparent allusion by Körner to the German-American philosopher Hans Jonas's book *Das Prinzip Verantwortung: Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation* (1979).
18. Hans-U. Rausch, 'Matthias Körner: Maßstab für

- Literatur war Hofschreiberei', *Börsenblatt für den deutschen Buchhandel* (1990) 15, pp. 277-79 (p. 278).
19. Königsdorf's topical articles from this period can be found in her collections *1989 oder Ein Moment Schönheit: Eine Collage aus Briefen, Gedichten, Texten* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1990), and *Aus dem Dilemma eine Chance machen: Reden und Aufsätze* (Hamburg and Zurich: Luchterhand, 1991). Her contribution to the 1987 Writers' Congress and an article written for the East German science journal *spectrum* in January 1988 (but refused publication) contained similar critical ideas to those later expressed in 'Das Prinzip Menschenwürde'; Königsdorf, 'Von der Schwierigkeit, "Ich" zu sagen' and 'Standpunkt', *1989 oder Ein Moment Schönheit*, pp. 7-9, 11-13 respectively.
20. Helga Königsdorf, 'Wissenschaft und Verantwortung (X): Das Prinzip Menschenwürde', *Die Weltbühne*, 44 (1989) 24 (13 June), pp. 747-49.
21. The 'lecture' mentioned here is presumably the same as the text entitled 'Menschenwürde oder Der Schlaf der Vernunft' in *1989 oder Ein Moment Schönheit*, pp. 58-79. This text, which is stated to have been published in *Wochenpost*, 17/11/1989, is more personal than 'Das Prinzip Menschenwürde' and more closely orientated towards the political situation of the day.

22. Karlheinz Lohs and Sonnhild Döring, editors, *Im Mittelpunkt der Mensch: Umweltgestaltung - Umweltschutz* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1975).
23. Helga Königsdorf, *Respektloser Umgang: Erzählung* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1986, 1988), p. 93.
24. Königsdorf, *Meine ungehörigen Träume: Geschichten* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1978); *Der Lauf der Dinge: Geschichten* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1982); *Lichtverhältnisse: Geschichten* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1988).
25. See Königsdorf's essays 'Die Linken verschlafen den Weltuntergang' and 'Countdown für Hase und Igel', *Aus dem Dilemma eine Chance machen*, pp. 64-68, 100-06 respectively.
26. Richard Pietraß, note on 'Fontäne', *Notausgang: Gedichte* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1980), p. 87. Pietraß, 'Der Ringende', *Freiheitsmuseum: Gedichte* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1982), p. 37. Pietraß, *Spielball: Gedichte* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1987). Pietraß, *Weltkind: Gedichte* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1990).
27. My account of the writing of this essay is based on 'Vom Vergehen der Arten', *Windvogelviereck*, pp. 132-35, and on a conversation with the author in 1989.
28. From my interview with Pietraß.
29. Wensierski quotes numerical data from the same

ultimate IUCN source as Pietraß in his documentation of damage to wildlife in the GDR. The main cause has been habitat destruction due to agriculture. The problem was discussed in the GDR by biologists from 1972 and conservationists from 1974, but the official reports merely recommended damage limitation. *Ökologische Probleme*, pp. 211-19 ('Artenrückgang von Tieren und Pflanzen').

30. Pietraß, 'Spielball', *Spielball*, pp. 79-80.
31. Wulf Kirsten, 'werktätig', *die erde bei Meißen: gedichte* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1986), p. 73.
32. See, for example, Mallinckrodt's summary of official tenets and theories on the environment as they stood in late 1982. Anita M. Mallinckrodt, *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR: Literature, Church, Party and Interest Groups in Their Socio-Political Context* (Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of America, 1987), pp. 85-86.
33. Pietraß, 'Homunculus', 'Klon', *Freiheitsmuseum*, pp. 83, 94-95 respectively.
34. Manfred Wolter, 'Nachdenken über das Verantwortbare: Gaterslebener Rede' (1986), in *Windvogelviereck*, pp. 308-17 (p. 317).
35. Erhard Geißler, 'Bruder Frankenstein oder - Pflegefälle aus der Retorte?', *SuF*, 36 (1984) 6, pp. 1289-1319.
36. Pietraß names the founder of a Nobel prizewinners'

sperm bank in California as Graham Shockley, inventor of the transistor. *Windvogelviereck*, p. 138. Geißler, though, gives the founder's name as Robert Graham, a contact-lens millionaire, while William B. Shockley is one of his collaborators. *SuF*, 36 (1984) 6, pp. 1326-17.

37. John Erpenbeck, 'Näherungen', in *Windvogelviereck*, pp. 319-49.
38. Horst Nalewski, 'Zeugen der Zukunft: "Windvogelviereck. Schriftsteller über Wissenschaften und Wissenschaftler"', in *DDR-Literatur '87 im Gespräch*, edited by Siegfried Rönisch (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1988), pp. 359-68. Jürgen Engler, 'Sachkundig - menschenkundig', *ndl*, 36 (1988) 1, pp. 359-68.
39. Gabriele Eckart, *So sehe ick die Sache: Protokolle aus der DDR* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1984).
40. Max Frisch, *Schweiz ohne Armee: Ein Palaver* (Zürich: Limmat, 1989). Günter Grass, *Deutscher Lastenausgleich: Wider das dumpfe Einheitsgebot: Reden und Gespräche* (Frankfurt am Main: Luchterhand, 1990). Grass, *Ein Schnäppchen namens DDR: Letzte Reden vorm Glockengeläut* (Frankfurt am Main: Luchterhand, 1980).

Chapter 3 - Narrative prose

1. Introduction

Klaus Schuhmann, in an important essay on the ecological poetry of the 1980s which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4, also provides a helpful definition of the role of narrative prose over the same decade. The portrayal of a fictional 'Umfeld' creates opportunities for analysis - 'Ursachenforschung zu treiben, Schuldzuweisungen auszusprechen, Verantwortlichkeiten zu benennen oder Versäumnisse einzuklagen' - which poetry cannot hope to emulate.¹

Although some of these investigative functions are also fulfilled by the essayistic prose already discussed in chapter 2, the distinctive contribution of narrative prose is in highlighting environmental problems within a specific social milieu, depicted in depth. Notwithstanding the movement away from Socialist Realist models since the mid-Sixties and the literary experimentation of the Eighties, East German 'environmental' narrative prose of the 1980s still generally explores problems through the representation of a conventional social context in a way which the more direct, analytical essay and the oblique, deictic genre of lyric poetry do not. As in

drama, this social context is realised in the form of characters, often fictive, who are accessible to the reader or listener. There is basic truth in Jurij Koch's belief that literature (i.e. prose fiction) is deeper in its interpretation and rendition of reality and longer-lasting in its effect than essays or journalism.²

Working on the basis of this preliminary expansion of Schuhmann's findings, this chapter will investigate how environmental issues are treated in narrative prose, using as examples a representative sample of East German texts from the 1980s which includes both traditional and innovatory forms. While most attention will be paid to the environmental content and intrinsically related matters in these texts, consideration will also be given to the socio-political context of what are after all works about public issues, and to the question of which methods are most suitable for handling the newly recognised environmental issues. Does a new way of being in the world always necessitate a new way of writing, as Christa Wolf proposed in 'Lesen und Schreiben' (1968)?³ The second half of this introduction in particular will endeavour to relate the form of the texts studied to their content, and to show how they are typical of the environmental literature of the Eighties. The selected texts are Mathias Körner's *Die Totenkeule* (1988), Jurij Koch's *Der Kirschbaum* (1984) and Helga

Königsdorf's *Respektloser Umgang* (1986).⁴

The main body of this chapter will deal primarily with the environmental content, beginning with the more or less concrete ecological and social issues and moving on to the more abstract philosophical and moral questions. In addition, the analysis of aspects of *Die Totenkeule*, *Der Kirschbaum* and *Respektloser Umgang* in this sequence in each section is intended to bring out a similar spectrum of topics reaching from the local to the global and the practical to the theoretical. Comparison will be made between the works at all stages. There follows a brief list of the coming sections and the topics they address:

2. 'Damaged nature': the literary presentation of nature both realistically as the scene of ecological problems and symbolically as the abode of meaning.
3. 'The human cost': modernisation is (generally) shown to alienate people from nature, each other, themselves and their past.
4. 'The systemic causes': literary investigation of the social, political and economic causes of civilisation's problems.
5. 'The question of progress': criticism of the ideology of 'progress', search for alternatives.
6. 'The central contradiction': dialectic of values and plot, views of societal development.

7. 'The moral dimension' of environmental issues as revealed in the thoughts and actions of the characters.
8. 'The spiritual dimension': the non-rational as a cause and a solution.
9. 'Reception' of the texts in the GDR, light shed on the environmental debate and the official treatment of sensitive issues.
10. 'Evaluation of the narrative approach', its possibilities and limitations.

Die Totenkeule is one of several Eighties works whose authors have chosen to give a realistic depiction of how environmental problems affect a community of people. In this case it is a Lausitz village affected by the intensification of agriculture,⁵ but in other examples it is an industrial town affected by air pollution, as in Monika Maron's *Flugasche* (1981), or a mountain resort faced by a dilemma over a new factory, as in Lia Pirskawetz's *Der Stille Grund*. Although *Flugasche* in particular embraces wider issues, all three books place environmental deterioration in the social context of everyday life, where the personal and structural forces that sustain it can be seen in action. The authors further draw attention to the historical context of environmental destruction, which is, interestingly, evidenced in all three cases by links between radical

economic and societal change in the early twentieth century and the problems of today: Pirskawetz goes back in time to seek the past causes of present effects; Maron emphasises the presence of the past in the outdated, intolerable conditions in the town of B.; and Körner uses the unjust fate of the central character's mother after the First World War (*DT*, p. 10), typical of that age, as one of the main historic starting-points for his depiction of the subsequent development of a rural community over decades.

I have chosen to focus on *Die Totenkeule* rather than either of these other two texts for a combination of reasons. Firstly, *Die Totenkeule* embraces the important countryside theme. Secondly, Körner is a relatively young writer (born in 1954) who has not yet received due scholarly attention such as has been given to Maron. Thirdly, *Die Totenkeule* offers a tight, forceful exposition of environmental issues, while *Der Stille Grund* is in comparison over-lengthy and evasive (e.g. by confining the blame for present problems to the capitalist past).

In *Die Totenkeule*, the representation of relationships between characters over time, which could have been narrated continuously, is achieved by linking together episodes from the past by the movement of the 'Totenkeule' from house to house after the protagonist's death (according to custom, those friends of a dead

person who are prepared to dig his/her grave sign a list attached to the club). This unusual technique allows the social network in the village to be depicted through the relationships of other characters to Heiner Mitzig, who occupies the central position in the novel and a dominant social position as LPG Chairman, but who is hardly a 'positive hero'. The sequence of episodes follows his life approximately, but the biographical continuity is relativised by constant returns to the present and - within the constraints of the consistently laconic style - by the same 'polyphony' ('verstanden im Sinne Michail Bachtins als vielfältige Verschmelzung von Erzähler- und Personenrede') that Jürgen Lehmann has identified in Martin Stade's village stories from the collection *Der Windsucher* (1984).⁵ This narrative form is said by Lehmann to bring out the social isolation felt by the old characters, as opposed to the socialist community of solidarity conjured up by the dominant narrator figure in the 'socialist rural novel'.

Körner, though, a young writer with a background in agriculture, does not simply react against earlier socialist writers in his own contribution to the rural literature of the GDR. The folksy, seemingly naive style, the peasant wisdom, the affectionately-drawn types and the episodic structure are features shared with Erwin Strittmatters's work, which seems to have exercised an

influence on Körner. Both, incidentally, write about the Niederlausitz region. The reviewers, who undoubtedly over-emphasise the importance of Strittmatter as a model,⁶ point out the similarity of the young Mitzig to Ole Bienkopp (1963) and of the older Mitzig to Stanislaus Büdner in *Der Wundertäter III* (1980).⁷ They also mention the variation of motifs from other classic works in the socialist realist tradition, the tractor ploughing competition from Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil Upturned* (1932) and the trail of heroic successes from Neutsch's *Spur der Steine* (1964).⁸ The author examines the literary canon with a critical, even satirical, eye to see whether the old concepts still hold firm, which they do not; Mitzig's modernising schemes have become a series of heroic failures by the end of the book.

Der Kirschbaum is one of a group of prose works about Lausitz people whose settled lives are threatened by the energy industry. The ominous plan in *Der Kirschbaum* to flood a whole valley has its equivalent in Koch's earlier, more harmonious *Erzählung* and stage play *Landvermesser* (1975/77), in which a Sorbian family are directly threatened by lignite extraction. In these writings Koch's concern for culture and environment pervades the action, whereas Joachim Nowotny, another East German writer who has made much of the theme outlined above, uses the doomed villages in

Abschiedsdisco (1980) and *Letzter Auftritt der Komparsen* (1981) principally as a dramatic location where people are put to the test. *Letzter Auftritt der Komparsen* neglects social issues which *Der Kirschbaum* addresses directly, if not with full force. I have selected *Der Kirschbaum* rather than one of Nowotny's works because of this greater engagement with the environmental topic and because Koch's story provides such a clear contrast with *Die Totenkeule* in its different treatment of similar material.

While Körner's novel encapsulates world processes in the framework of a typical GDR village, Koch restricts his view still further to a small group of characters and a single narrative line. The opening words can be taken to apply to this method as well as to the field of vision of a character driving in heavy rain: 'Scheibenwischer. Ein Ausschnitt von der Wirklichkeit, auf den es ankommt, wird freigehalten' (p. 7). The section of reality picked out by Koch is, firstly, of special rather than typical significance and, secondly, is seen in an indistinct or ambiguous way rather than with the clarity of Körner. If we look at the first point, a contrast between closeness to reality and extraordinary aspects is a characteristic of the German *Novelle* tradition⁹ to which Koch has added *Der Kirschbaum*. Like Nowotny in his *Novelle*, *Letzter Auftritt der Komparsen*, Koch is using an exceptional case to highlight everyday reality and explore its

possibilities. This case, in brief, is the rivalry between the interloper Sieghart, a geologist who is investigating the terrain to be flooded, and the local farmer Mathias for the love of Ena, the latter's fiancée. The story has a turning-point (the *Wendepunkt* of Ludwig Tieck) in the accidental death of Mathias in a forest pond when he is trying to warn off the other two by taking them for a breakneck coach ride; after that, the wedding and secondment abroad of Sieghart and Ena are followed by the collapse of the marriage and their tragic deaths as if determined by a rigorous but mysterious fate.

Der Kirschbaum, as is characteristic of the *Novelle* as opposed to the *Erzählung*, is written in a self-consciously artistic style and makes frequent and fundamental use of 'signs'.¹⁰ Recurrent motifs, such as the barren cherry tree and the stork, but also characters, actions and events, invite varying interpretations and contribute to the ambiguity noted above. The signs in particular reflect the local inhabitants' traditional, symbolic way of thinking, and in the contemporary context they illustrate the conflict between progress and tradition. Koch in fact gives folklore and myths a new relevance by invoking the spirits of nature to resist the forces that are destroying it, as Joachim Walther does in the radio play *Lautlos und dennoch eine*

Stimme sagenhaft (1985) and as the Soviet writer Valentin Rasputin does in *Farewell to Matyora* (1976). Like *Der Kirschbaum*, that novella describes the destruction of a village by a reservoir and the spiritual effects on the inhabitants. Ancient myths are used to a similar purpose, to explain the destructiveness of modern civilisation and to oppose it by drawing on an older, harmonious source, in Hanns Cibulka's *Swantow* (1982), Christa Wolf's *Kassandra* (1983) and Irmtraud Morgner's *Amanda* (1983).

The perspective of *Respektloser Umgang* is still narrower and more subjective than that of *Der Kirschbaum*, but the reader sees more of the world with greater clarity. The book takes the form of a personal confession by a terminally ill woman scientist over a year-long period in 1983-84 (see *RU*, p. 23). It gives a profound insight into the scientific processes behind environmental destruction, although it is ostensibly concerned with the responsibility of scientists for weapons development. Königsdorf, who is of course herself a scientist, avoids both the optimism of such advocates of science as Dieter Noll (e.g. *Kippenberg*, 1979) and the sceptical attitude of such opponents as Wolf and Cibulka. She writes from a woman's point of view, but in the text expresses mistrust of Wolf's concept - as developed in *Kassandra* - of 'weibliches

Schreiben' as the expression of the objects of history¹¹ (see *RU*, p. 54). The true extent of disagreement here is left open by Königsdorf's aphoristic style. This book apparently takes issue with *Kassandra* in other ways too, by questioning Wolf's aversion to 'male' science and by placing the present danger of nuclear weapons in the context of recent scientific history rather than myth. This topic is introduced through the figure of Lise Meitner, who appears to the narrator in the hallucinations induced by her medicine. The real Meitner worked with Otto Hahn for thirty years on research into the atomic nucleus until her emigration from Nazi Germany in 1939.

Dieter Schlenstedt assigns *Respektloser Umgang* to a new literary form which he calls 'poetische Prosa', spanning conventional genres and capable of developing towards authentic narration, fantastic invention and essayistic reflection. This form seeks meaning in reality rather than fictions and bears the utopian message of a 'Zukunft, da es zur Norm gehören wird, einander zuzuhören und auf die einzelnen Leben zu achten.'¹² This argument is independently taken further by Heinz-Jürgen Staszak, who relates the 'narrative network'¹³ with mutually interacting threads which he finds in *Respektloser Umgang* and Wolf's *Störfall* ('discursive prose') specifically to the new situation of

the individual faced by 'global problems'.¹⁴

Respektloser Umgang resembles *Störfall* and Hanns Cibulka's *Swantow*, another diary-like work, in having a non-linear structure comprising several strands: present autobiographical narrative; reminiscences of past events; the imaginings of the narrator (the conversations between the narrator of *Respektloser Umgang* and Lise Meitner are matched by the *Störfall* narrator's fictitious dialogue with her brother); mythical allusions and literary quotations in *Swantow* and *Störfall* especially; documentary material, which prominently includes nuclear issues in all three books; essayistic reflection about war and peace, science and technology, social structures and male/female relations, which the women authors emphasise. These works exhibit the tendency of East German 'global problem' literature in the 1980s to include documentary and subjective moments, which can also be seen in *Flugasche* and the multi-layered novels *Amanda* and *Kassandra*. I have chosen to concentrate on *Respektloser Umgang* rather than these other works because Königsdorf's book has not yet been sufficiently examined from an 'environmental' perspective by scholars.¹⁵ Moreover, the angle from which the author approaches the issues (scientific, urban,¹⁶ female, innovative in literary terms) provides many interesting contrasts with the perspectives of Koch and Körner (rural, male, relatively conventional in literary terms).

2. Damaged nature

Some description of the real problems proves necessary in most environmental prose literature, although its place may be taken by less direct allusion in science fiction, such as Günter Kunert's 'Flaschenpost', a short story set in the future,¹⁷ or in a parabolic work like Brezan's *Krabat*. Even when the portrayal is more realistic, there is great variety in how much and what kind of material is used, how it is worked into the fictional context and what implications it bears. The different literary depictions and meanings of damaged nature are the subject of this section.

A 'naturalistic' picture of damaged nature forms part of Körner's precise, typical depiction of the development of GDR agriculture since the War with its many attendant problems.¹⁸ With this degree of accuracy, literature is probably fulfilling a journalistic function. The development can be followed chronologically as if the novel were almost a historical document. From the very start some time in the 1950s the collective farm nicknamed 'Zur dürren Ziege' is handicapped by a lack of environmental expertise, being founded on bureaucratic orders by the proletarianised peasant Mitzig against the wishes of the majority of

farmers, who are gradually rendered subordinate. The result is misguided, wasteful projects, such as the thoroughly Bienkoppian attempt to raise pigs in the forest against their domesticated nature, and small-scale damage to the natural environment, like the building of a village shop on a waste patch of church ground defended by the priest as 'Gottes Natur' (p. 53).

These trivial events, such as have always occurred, are followed by environmental problems on a new scale once industrial principles begin to be applied to agriculture in the GDR in the early 1970s.¹⁹ The organic unity of farm work is split up into specialised tasks under the organisational changes of 1972, when an 'Agrochemisches Zentrum' takes over responsibility for fertiliser and pest control in the whole district, and the old LPGs are divided into animal and plant production enterprises (respectively 'Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft-Tierproduktion' or LPG-T, 'Kooperative Abteilung Pflanzenproduktion' or KAP) on a much larger scale.

The treatment of arable farming is a good example of the failure of the new approach and the conflicts it generates. When the KAP is established, the old fields are merged into huge areas which are better suited to modern machinery. Mitzig expresses the official attitude in a slightly caricatured form: 'Die natürlichen

Bedingungen werden den Erfordernissen angepaßt, sagte Mitzig. Richtige Rollfelder brauchen wir' (p. 132). But the planning of arable farming from above ignores the natural soil conditions which the old farmers know well; thus the maize on the arid half of Sector 16 fails to grow, while the chaff-cutters are incapable of movement on the half that used to be a moist, fertile meadow (p. 132). Chemical fertilisers greatly increase crop yields, but, as both the old Sorbian peasant Juschko and the qualified engineer Halber try to convince Mitzig, yields are bound to fall drastically if the disappearing humus is not replaced. The KAP boss, though, deliberately ignores the future consequences of today's successes (p. 185). The grubbing-up of hedges, bushes and trees between fields causes the bird population to decline, but the LPG accountant and amateur ornithologist Fänniger cannot convince Mitzig, who believes in the superiority of chemical regulation, that the birds have an agricultural worth (pp. 189-90).

Similar lessons are yielded by the grotesquely outsized '4000er Milchviehanlage', which causes serious economic and ecological knock-on effects with the huge need for fodder and generation of slurry. The farmers' ironic but perceptive estimation of official development is expressed in the names 'Leichenfinger' for tower silos (p. 176) and 'Leichenflecken vom Boden' for the barren patches left on the fields by excessive application of

slurry as fertiliser (p. 184). Mention must also be made of the piping and contamination of the village stream, the drying-up of wells in part because of the nearby open-cast lignite mines (p. 187) and the ludicrous attempts to establish a fish pond in compliance with a central policy (pp. 194-97; this episode is compared with poems on similar subjects in chapter 4, section 2 below).

In spite of the rich symbolism of birds and water, Körner treats them in a characteristically matter-of-fact way (the author's mistrust of mysticism will be considered in section 8 of this chapter). Some damage to nature in Wuttkow, though, is allowed to have a straightforward symbolic meaning. The poisoning of the Three Oaks, which are associated with a heroic incident from the Napoleonic Wars and the village youths' traditional test of manhood, by slurry in the stream (pp. 188-89) and the sudden death of an elm which Fänniger was trying to save from Mitzig's melioration testify to a scorn for tradition and nature on the part of authority. Just like Koch's cherry-tree, the elm proves to have been poisoned by a copper nail (p. 190). This insidious attack on what is noble and lasting, apparently carried out by the agents of change, may well be a deliberate allusion to *Der Kirschbaum*.

While *Die Totenkeule* describes existing problems in

detail, the landscape in *Der Kirschbaum* is represented as still unspoilt and the threat to it is a future one which casts its shadow over the present. This menace is indeterminate from the start, when the at first unnamed Sieghart, seeking help at a strange farmstead after the breakdown of his jeep, tells the unnamed young woman evasively, 'Wir machen Untersuchungen, wir untersuchen ...' (p. 14). Even when he lets Ena know his true objective, he uses technical language and only admits in snippets that his team are analysing the soil to determine whether this valley is a worthwhile site for a reservoir serving power stations. The majesty and also the homeliness of the landscape are made plain (pp. 38, 43-44), but the precise extent and timing of the destruction are left vague (pp. 40-6). Over and above the 'real' grounds for this in official secrecy, the early stage of planning and Sieghart's unwillingness to hurt the feelings of the woman he is seducing, the image of a deluge blotting out the familiar landscape corresponds to the stupendous forces of environmental, technological or social change as seen from the limited perspective of individuals. Marianne Bruns made a similar, more explicit use of the biblical Flood as a metaphor for ecological crisis in the novel *Der grüne Zweig* (1979) (see also chapter 4, section 5).

The contradiction between technological change and nature is played out as much on an ideal level of

dynamism versus stasis as in the everyday world. The tragedy of Ena, Mathias and Sieghart is reflected in the indistinct struggle between the elemental forces of progress on one hand and nature and tradition on the other, the war of 'Märchen gegen Apparate' which the grandfather reports to the *Wassermann* in the forest pond (p. 53). The local people retain their ancient affinity with the land, which a taxi-driver from the town momentarily senses in 'die Abgeschiedenheit, die Ruhe, die Seele, die sich hierher zurückgezogen hat, die Seele vergangener Generationen, von denen manchmal die Rede war' (p. 136). They are linked to nature through their traditions, represented by their continuing veneration of Siwa, the goddess of life, and by the figure of the *Braschka*, the bringer of wedding invitations who is here identified with the *Wassermann*.

The natural signs that accompany the appearance of Sieghart are as typically ambiguous as his first sight of Ena and Mathias: 'Aber auch andere Deutungen waren möglich' (p. 11). The first ever failure of the stork to return to the farm is both an omen of ill fortune and a sign that the balance of nature is disturbed (a similar real-life event is referred to in the essay 'Da sah...').²⁰ The poisoning of the cherry tree by an unknown hand hints at the callous, even malicious, destructiveness of progress, but it is more open than the

death of the elm in *Die Totenkeule*. The tree itself, failing to bloom until the end, has a sinister aspect which Körner's monumental elm lacks. The poisoning is a premonition of the mortal wound that Sieghart inflicts on the strained love of Ena and Mathias; her affections are then transferred to Sieghart, as the crown of the tree is dragged off to a new home. It may represent the endangered situation of the Sorbian people, exemplified by Ena, in the fast-moving modern world. Finally, both the return of the storks and the eerie blossoming of the cherry tree at the violent denouement affirm that delicate life is reborn even in apparent death.

In *Respektloser Umgang* the threat to the environment makes itself felt less directly than in *Der Kirschbaum* or *Die Totenkeule*. Basic nuclear research is of course an interference in nature, but this aspect is not picked up apart perhaps from the deliberately inconclusive reference to the fire of Prometheus (p. 78). Nature, which most often appears as the narrator's physical constitution rather than anything external, is regarded with detachment throughout. Seen from another viewpoint, though, nuclear physics has made the total environmental catastrophe of atomic war possible. In a rare use of current nuclear facts and figures, the author baldly describes how the employment of 45% of existing nuclear weapons would cause a 'nuclear winter' (p. 99). Although

the peaceful use of nuclear power is only mentioned twice, and that is in quotations from Rutherford denying that atomic energy will ever be of any commercial value (pp. 59, 72), its very absence could prompt thoughts about this hazardous technology - especially with the temporal coincidence of the Chernobyl accident in the year of publication.

The immense threat that informs *Der Kirschbaum* is present here in the illness of the narrator and the analogous nuclear danger, but Königsdorf analyses the causes more deeply than Koch and explicitly proclaims a moral obligation to protect life. There are, though, also tangible manifestations of our deadly predicament in *Respektloser Umgang*. Common experience is captured in a few everyday examples of environmental disturbance, such as the sulphur dioxide from the gasworks that prevents the narrator from sleeping at night (p. 107) and maybe even the lack of hard winters nowadays (global warming? p. 72). The reference to 'die Verknappung der Luft' (p. 20) and the prediction of a struggle for air, water and energy (p. 93) point to a bleak future if nothing is done about the exploitation and poisoning of the planet. The text closes with the words: 'Hoch oben jagen die Schwalben. Es sind ihrer weniger, dieses Jahr. Irgend etwas ist ihnen zugestoßen' (p. 116). The vanishing birds, an image matched in the other two books discussed

here and many other GDR works (see chapter 4, section 5), are a symptom of nature's sickness, caused by human activity of some kind. Beyond that, they stand for endangered life - of individual persons or of all humanity. Their unrestrained joy gives courage to persevere in life in spite of its fragility (an example of literary 'Lebenshilfe').

The depiction of damaged nature in these three works exhibits great divergencies and some basic common features. While *Die Totenkeule* shows in a concrete and detailed manner how ecological problems arise from and react upon social and economic reality, both nature and the destructive forces are to a large extent mythicised in *Der Kirschbaum*, and *Respektloser Umgang* concentrates on the sources of human self-destructiveness. The main examples of this are nuclear weapons and National Socialism, but environmental problems are shown in the narrator's reflection to be another significant manifestation of the same ill. The three works all criticise the destructive side of science and technology and do express a common care for nature and human life, often expressed through natural imagery.

3. The human cost

The cost of progress, as revealed in GDR literature since the late 1960s, is not confined to the disturbance of the natural or semi-natural balance by new technologies. It is further shown that, even in the country, technological and social changes have estranged human beings from each other, caused them to forget about their past and broken their sense of unity with nature. Even in a socialist society, the strict and ever-advancing division of labour alienates man from his work and from the nature he is ultimately manipulating. There have been such modernising changes in the German countryside at least since the growth of industry in the mid-nineteenth century,²¹ but the reorganisation of East German rural life from the late 1940s onward, including the redistribution of land, collectivisation and intensification, was an especially accelerated and forcible transition. The negative results, moreover, only find belated recognition in GDR literature from the late Sixties onwards.²² In comparison with *Die Totenkeule* and *Der Kirschbaum*, *Respektloser Umgang* provides something of a corrective to rural pessimism with its wholly different urban perspective on these problems.

In *Die Totenkeule* the changes imposed on Wuttkow without regard for local conditions or local people quite clearly set a process of social decay in motion. The course is set early on by a symbolic incident, the demolition of the old threshing-house to provide foundation material for a new, architecturally inappropriate five-storey block of flats. The stones, like the villagers, prove to be unsuitable as 'foundations' for the new construction, but Mitzig will not compromise, declaring naively, 'Wir kommen ohne Vergangenheit aus' (p. 39). It is of further significance in this connection that the real father of this socialist pioneer was the old *Großbauer* Pollke - which hints at the suppressed past of the new society and maybe even its 'bastard' nature. Even harder sentiments are expressed by Hasenhuber with respect to the mechanisation of agriculture: 'Wir sprengen alles Hergebrachte [...]. Ohne Zweifel' (p. 130).

The result of this arrogant policy is that the politically-driven industrialisation of agriculture is unchecked by the experience of traditional farmers. Under the new KAP regime of nominal equality between 'workers' and 'peasants', the old Juschko couple, who still respect hard work and the cycles of nature, are overtaken by the mercenary-minded townsman Hein, who speeds through his work with no care for 'Bauernstolz' (p. 136). In this

polemical portrayal, both the managers and many newcomers to the village are indifferent to prudent farming practice, animal welfare and the land they work on. The town girls, for example, are more interested in fashion and pop-stars than in the cows they mindlessly attach to the milking machine, while Juschkon longs for the days when she was entrusted with whole cows, not just their udders (pp. 178-9).

The loss of the farmer's pride goes hand in hand with the fading of old traditions. Barriers are set between present and past when the threshing-house is torn down and the 'Philosophenstein', reputed to be a petrified sage, is removed from its hilltop on Mitzig's orders to make way for a House of Culture. This act indicates scorn for traditional beliefs, the mysteries of nature and the value of contemplation. Although the villagers refuse to take part in the action, the stone quickly falls into oblivion in its new location (pp. 11-12, 114-6, 151). The villagers still maintain their own custom of the 'Totenkeule', but the debasement of surviving folklore is shown by the inauthentic Sorbian welcome put on for visitors to the collective farm (p. 181).

Redressing the partisan view of Bernhard Seeger, Erwin Strittmatter and others, Körner gives fair treatment to the opponents of the collectivisation and industrialisation of agriculture. In addition to the

tensions following upon the foundation of the LPG, Mitzig is shown to act dogmatically and vindictively in, for example, instigating a boycott of the private butcher, who flees to the West, and persecuting the son of old Pollke. Not only the wealthier elements, but many poorer farmers fail to fit into the new world and, like Juschkon, coexist uneasily with the newcomers. Mitzig's later intransigence places subordinates like Fänniger, his old ally Littig and ultimately himself under intolerable strain. Thus, in Körner's account, the forced modernisation of the more-or-less traditional village has led to a general social malaise which harms everyone.

Similar social losses are presented in a romantic light and concentrated onto the individual level in *Der Kirschbaum*. Here the modern man Sieghart, who believes in the subjection of nature to human needs, revolutionises life in the undoubtedly idealised and archaic 'autonome Welt des Gehöfts' (p. 27). The single scene where we see Ena working with many other women on an endless LPG field highlights the idyll of her family's unchanged domestic existence (pp. 88-89). The four inhabitants live in an almost primal harmony with nature, which can be seen in their folklore, the grandfather's empathy with birds, trees and ponds and Mathias's

mysterious command over the land. This harmony is temporarily threatened, though, when Sieghart replaces Mathias as master of the house and sets about rationally organising life on the farm. The details of work are typically omitted, but the sale of the horses indicates the direction of change (p. 108). Koch gives an extreme case of separation from one's 'roots' when young Ena is torn from her family home in natural surroundings and set down in the highly artificial, urban environment of Paris. The metropolis is shown to have valid attractions, but the author evidently favours a life close to nature over one in the city, where the heroine cannot survive.

The loss of traditional spiritual values is concretely illustrated by the impotent rivalry for the focal position in the household between the ancient wooden head of Siwa, goddess of life, and the television set which Sieghart provocatively places on top of 'her' cupboard. The sacred image, although anachronistic, suggests that the family shares in an ancient tradition of venerating life, against which the pictures that pass across the face of the modern 'idol' seem transient and trivial, although they show important technological breakthroughs (pp. 109-12). The goddess remains powerful in the modern world, exacting her revenge when Sieghart sells the image to a Paris antique shop. This event triggers Ena's lapse into madness and ultimately the

killing of Sieghart and herself. Less ambivalent wedding customs which unite the community are also maintained: the *Braschka* bears news of forthcoming marriages, the two blind old men who 'still see a sense in their existence' play the trumpet and the three-stringed fiddle and the village girls dance the old dances (pp. 71, 100-1). Although the historic culture is not in as atrophied a state as in *Die Totenkeule*, which is moreover set at an earlier date,²³ a full knowledge of traditional lore is confined to the older characters. Like 'Da sah ich sie liegen: schön unsere Dörfer', *Der Kirschbaum* is both an attempt to preserve the wealth of village culture in spiritually impoverished times and an appeal for others to do the same.

The social tensions brought by 'progress' are dramatised in the tense individual relations between Sieghart on the one hand and Mathias, the grandfather and Ena on the other. Apart from these personalised conflicts, the social impoverishment of modern life is differentiated to a greater degree than one might expect. The village people still form a community in life and death, although there is a sign of alienation in the grandfather's isolation from the younger generations at the wedding when he senses something worrying that they cannot (pp. 98-99). The farmstead is a tight-knit, autonomous unit, but the family members are turned in on

themselves with little apparent contact with the outside world. For Ena, Sieghart therefore represents the possibility of liberation from provincial constrictions, although it is by the conventional escape route for a woman of marrying a man with good prospects. Again, the modern world presents an attractive face in the rough comradeship of the drillers' camp and the friendliness of the Parisians, but the vibrancy of the French capital has its cost in the 'Ungeborgenheit' of the individual, who is no more than a corpuscle in the city's bloodstream (p. 118). The march of progress, which does have advantages in Koch's representation, threatens people's emotional (not rational) understanding of nature and their past and makes them insensitive.

Respektloser Umgang, in contrast to these works, opens up a strictly individual perspective onto the human cost of material progress, that is to say, the loss of respect for human dignity in a progress- and performance-fixated world. A case in point is the narrator's illness, which makes her an uncomfortable presence for other people. Her lover shows his anxiety through protectiveness, while her colleagues at work, who have in the past envied her joy, are - so the narrator says - happy to see this unproductive scientist leave the institute and then to forget about her (pp. 103-4). Those high in the civilian and military structures have

suffered a still greater loss of humanity, exemplified in the way they reduce people to the level of objects in their calculations. The moral need for a 'mobilisation of humaneness' becomes obvious.

Helga Königsdorf draws attention to tradition just as forcefully as Jurij Koch, to the human connections in the advance of nuclear physics and to the memories of survivors of the Third Reich (the narrator's father and Lise Meitner). These experiences belong to the twentieth century but nonetheless represent the 'origin' and 'roots' which the narrator needs to create a personal sense of continuity and responsibility for what is to come (p. 27). The brutality of the Nazi period, individualised in the fates of the narrator's Jewish grandmother and father as well as of Lise Meitner, shows how far the objectification of human beings can go. The scientific tradition explored in *Respektloser Umgang* warns against such dangerous illusions as the claim in the First World War that gas weapons would bring a speedy end to the fighting. It overcomes the barriers between present and past by showing the great physicists as fallible human beings and not 'respectfully' turning them into flawless heroes. It helps to explain the ways by which mankind has reached its present advanced and endangered state. And, in contrast to the essentially static traditions in the two rural stories, the advance

of science shows the new and old in constant, fruitful interplay rather than the new defeating and superseding the old.

Although they are less frequent than the narrator's thoughts about herself and other people, several observations of nature are worked into the year-long narrative, such as the closing scene with the swallows and the mild spring evenings which remind the narrator that she no longer counts (pp. 72-3). This residual, affectional relationship with nature is an authentic reflection of the experience of modern city people. Like the majority of them, she retains a childhood affinity with deer, grass and forests, but they no longer set her soul vibrating as they used to do when she was a girl. Her relationship with nature is now sober ('Jetzt ist der Wald - der Wald. Das Reh - das Reh', p. 95) or, when thoughts of the past intrude, disturbed ('Die Mücken bleiben aus. Im Wald fallen die Vögel schwer wie überreife Früchte zu Boden', p. 99). The estrangement of humans from nature is registered but the theme is not developed in this book, where conventional humanitarian concerns predominate.

Die Totenkeule and *Der Kirschbaum* show country people under the pressure of modernisation losing contact with the natural world around them and their own past, and suffering social fragmentation. The old people are

least able to adapt to the new times in both cases. In *Die Totenkeule* these related processes can be followed over time in the social context of a village, whereas in *Der Kirschbaum* they are radicalised in a sharp conflict between a traditional enclave and modern civilisation. Körner tells a cautionary tale of the decline of valuable village customs and ways of thinking, while Koch attempts to carry across into the present a comparable if more mythically tinged heritage. Königsdorf brings uncomfortable aspects of the past and their modern parallels to the surface, maybe neglecting the man-nature relationship from her advanced urban viewpoint. However, this perspective makes it clear that it is possible to live a fulfilling life outside a traditional, quasi-natural framework.

4. The systemic causes

Essays are not the only type of literature able to analyse the systemic causes of such problems as we have seen so far. As Schuhmann indicated, narrative prose too is a suitable instrument for this task. This section will show how and where the authors under consideration uncover the roots of environmental and allied social

problems in the structures, values and functioning of the GDR's political, social and economic systems.

Just as in 'Fragen eines schreibenden Abgeordneten', Körner in his novel stresses that the hierarchical, unaccountable decision-making structure in the GDR promotes environmental and social losses. As a work of fiction, though, *Die Totenkeule* can illuminate a broader and deeper section of society than this factually-based, first-person essay. The fictive chain of command, obviously satirising reality, reaches down from unnamed regions through the *Bezirk* functionaries and the *Kreis* bureaucrat Hasenhuber to Mitzig, Chairman of the LPG and later of the KAP in Wuttkow, and the latter's right-hand man Littig, who becomes head of the LPG-T. Mitzig in his turn stands at the top of the KAP's management, which is represented as a pyramid of names on the magnetic board in his office (p. 142). In this highly critical representation, commands from above are implemented without proper consideration of the real needs, conditions or effects, and the heads of enterprises are all too ready to commit themselves to extravagant targets if that gains them prestige. For Hasenhuber, it is enough that Wuttkow should appear to be a successful example to others, regardless of the heavy borrowing, falsified reports and other hidden costs.

It is telling that this network of old friends in

leading posts consists of men, while such experienced women as Juschkon remain in the lowliest jobs. Although Marlene Mitzig has a better grasp of administration than her husband,²⁴ he persuades her to sacrifice her independence and her hopes of a job and children to support his career, which is driven by an almost pathetic desire to prove himself as a man. A careful reading of *Die Totenkeule* shows that society loses out from the suppression of women, but male domination is only one of several overlapping social problems, including generational, town/country and leader/led differences.

Wuttkow is the type of the village ruined by modernisation, and the heavy costs of its development cast serious doubt on the state policies epitomised by the Marxist slogan 'Weg mit dem Unterschied zwischen Stadt und Land!' (p. 38). From the pioneering phase of the 1950s, Mitzig and his political backers try to modernise the village, giving it an urban character. The small community suffers the implantation of unsuitably large and excessively expensive buildings (also one of Koch's targets) for residential, agricultural and even entertainment purposes. While young locals leave the land, commuters come in from the town to work. The result of urbanisation of the village is that the old ethos of honesty, hard work, understanding of nature and social stability, which was however supported by an

unjust social order, is superseded by a valueless state in which avarice, sloppy work, ignorance of nature and social fragmentation flourish. Together with the conveniences of urban life, the authorities have also brought the ills of the town to the country.

In the economic field, the policy of intensifying and maximising agricultural production is shown to be a major cause of environmental problems in the countryside. The reorganisation of arable land into vast fields by Mitzig, working from a map alone, presupposes that (supposedly) rational planning, computer calculations and mechanisation will raise production unproblematically. The unconsidered application of these methods, though, leads to serious problems which will in the long term cause yields to fall back again. More effectively than the essays, Körner's fiction with its broad depiction of society demonstrates harmful bureaucratic ideologems in word and deed: the irrational belief in the power of reason, the cult of the new, faith in technology, the ethos of 'bigger is better' and, crucially, the belief that those in charge know best. These combine with the desire to outdo other KAPs to produce such grotesquely outsized projects as the dairy parlour for 4000 cattle, which Wuttkow's limited resources and environment cannot support. Körner's exposure of how bureaucratic structures, mistaken policies and ideological dogmatism have caused social, ecological and economic damage is a

serious indictment of the East German social system.

The perspective of *Der Kirschbaum* is not wide enough to take in such a detailed description of social mechanisms as Körner undertakes, but we can see snatches of the same processes at work in the lives of various individuals, who are more clearly highlighted here than in Koch's first-person-centred essays. Sieghart, like Mitzig, is one of those who implement the orders of the bureaucracy and have internalised their thinking, which sees the reordering of nature through grandiose technological schemes as the solution to the country's problems. This attitude is shown to prevail in Western technocratic circles as well. The reservoir project is at least preceded by a scientific investigation of the terrain, and the decision to proceed will take account of economic factors, but the planners and specialists ignore what lies outside their narrow domain: the wishes of the local people and the ecological impact. A similar emphasis on deeds prevails on a personal level in Sieghart's firm. There this ambitious man of action is used by his boss, who with his taciturn style, air of superiority and mannerisms could easily be a Western businessman (p. 105), to get projects accomplished successfully. Koch points out the human and environmental cost of taking performance, economic efficiency,

technological advancement and largeness of scale as one's guiding values. The specifically *socialist* nature of the system, though, is not counted as part of the problem, as it is in *Die Totenkeule*, nor are Marxist ideals contrasted with present practice. The avoidance of overt political comment is in one sense an evasion, but it also gives prominence to the universal features of the problem beyond specific social systems.

The urbanisation of the village is not explicitly discussed, but aspects of the two lifestyles are shown in conflict, the coherence of the village community and the self-sufficiency of the farmstead on one hand, the relative sophistication of the *Bezirk* town (Cottbus) and the even faster pace of life in Paris on the other. The reader is confronted with the yawning gap between two poles, embodied in the inherently unstable marriage of the country girl Ena and Sieghart, who has left his small-town upbringing behind to embrace modern, urbanising civilisation. Although Koch avoids the direct argument of his essays, the bias of *Der Kirschbaum* clearly coincides with his wish, expressed in an interview about this *Novelle*,

daß vorhandene Poesie, zum Beispiel die des Dorfes und seiner eigenständigen Kultur, nicht dem urbanen Zeitalter vergoldeter Wasserhähne und stählerner Kletterbäume geopfert wird.²⁵

The concentration on a central love relationship brings the links between male values and environmental destruction into greater prominence than the implicit criticism in *Die Totenkeule*, although Koch does mythicise the issue. Sieghart is the conqueror of nature and the conqueror of women, uniting sexual and technological power. In spite of the genuine tenderness he feels for Ena, he uses her as an instrument for the advancement of his career and maybe sexually as well. Nature is sustained by the guiding principle of the unemancipated peasant woman Ena, shared also by the other country people: to hand what one finds on to the next generation. However, nature is destroyed by Sieghart's creative urge. Granted that the allocation of passive roles to women and active to men in this story follows conventional stereotypes, the 'feminine' traditions of the countryside offer far more hope of human survival than the ultra-masculine values of technological civilisation. (For the sake of convenience I refer to active, constructive qualities as 'masculine' and to passive, nurturing qualities as 'feminine', though this is admittedly a simplification of the ideas in *Der Kirschbaum*.)

In *Respektloser Umgang*, Königsdorf adopts an opposite method to the objective social analysis of 'Das Prinzip Menschenwürde'; this is the self-examination of

one psyche, which produces a more lively but also more fragmented picture. The author's abiding belief in the worth of individuals leads her to consider within this subjective framework why it is that people can treat their own kind as objects (the treatment of non-human beings, though, is neglected). This tendency is facilitated by institutionalised structures and processes, of which the extreme examples are nuclear war planning and the National Socialist state. But it is also evident in scientific life, in the loss of regard for the narrator as her ability to work declines just as much as in the movement of peaceful scientific research towards a gigantic, industrial scale (see the example of the CERN nuclear research centre at Geneva, pp. 93-94). In accordance with a common method of dealing with complex issues in *Respektloser Umgang*, the modern (not only East German) practice of meticulously planning scientific research with utility as the goal is considered from different and even contradictory viewpoints: as a bureaucratic restriction on scientists' initiative which could have stifled atomic research at birth, as a welcome brake on dangerous developments, as the source of the medicines that keep the narrator alive (p. 69). On balance the institutionalisation of science seems to be questioned but not rejected, for the ultimate benefits, which mean nothing less than the survival of

humanity, justify the costs.

The stereotyping of people, most evidently according to sex, ethnic origin or state of health, is shown to be thoroughly harmful, leading in the worst case to the extermination of supposed 'subhumans'. The pervasive, sometimes unconscious, discrimination against women in a male-dominated society prevents them from making a full contribution as whole persons: Lise Meitner, for example, had to forgo love and motherhood in order to pursue the normally male career of scientist, and the narrator has to exert herself to combine all three roles even now. Such entrenched gender roles and sexist attitudes, which the narrator senses changing among the younger generation, are undoubtedly linked to the idolisation of success in industrial society and beyond that to its life-threatening power structures and instrumental thinking. There is a hope of change for the better in the narrator's advice to give up the old stereotypes and think for ourselves:

Man kann schließlich nicht die Anforderungen der Leistungsgesellschaft beklagen und zugleich deren herausragendsten Resultate zum Maßstab der eignen Arbeit erheben. Man muß seinen Ausschnitt suchen. Das starre Rollenspiel durchbrechen. (p. 56)

There is a basic agreement among these

philosophically different works as to where the systemic causes of environmental destruction and/or the objectification of human beings lie: in authoritarian structures, the subordination of women by men and male values, the primacy of economic and career goals and the promotion of large-scale technology. Körner and Koch see another major, if localised, cause in the adaptation of rural life to urban standards. *Die Totenkeule* emphasises mechanisms and policies; *Der Kirschbaum* gives an insight into the social processes on an individual level and the underlying values; and *Respektloser Umgang* examines society from the individual viewpoint, especially as regards gender questions. The common denominator is that there are dangerous faults in the GDR social system and, by implication, in the world, which is brought in geographically by Koch and through the context of history and global issues by Königsdorf. Some possible solutions will be considered over the following four sections.

5. The question of progress

In the last section we saw certain officially held values shown as contributing towards environmental destruction. This section will undertake a closer

examination of these ideas, which may be grouped under the heading of 'progress', and of alternatives put forward in *Die Totenkeule*, *Der Kirschbaum* and *Respektloser Umgang*. The industrialising, urbanising and socialising changes in the Soviet Zone/GDR since 1945 were guided by a concept of progress which saw economic growth, technological change and the advantages of socialism as essential for the fulfilment of social goals.²⁶ From this there arose the need in environmental literature to criticise this central component of the dominant ideology and perhaps to provide alternative standards for development.

Many principles propagated by the official side in *Die Totenkeule* fall under 'progress' in its vulgar sense: large-scale industrial organisation, centralised planning, specialisation, new technologies, maximisation of production, the subordination of nature to human ends, rationalism, urbanisation, the renunciation of the backward past. The resulting picture is something of a satirical exaggeration but undoubtedly based on reality. In the minds of the authority figures progress is a relatively simple matter of executing Party decisions, which are expected to bring the splendid results predicted in official propaganda. Even when his fish-breeding scheme is obviously failing, Mitzig, the representative of a class of arrivistes, clings to the

dogma of man's omnipotence over nature: 'Wir ordnen uns die Natur unter. Der Mensch ist die Krönung. Er ist vernünftig. Also kann er alles, weiß alles und macht alles richtig' (p. 196). For this uneducated man who has risen to responsible office, 'scientific-technological progress' is literally 'Das Zauberwort für das Morgen' (p. 95), the magic key to a miraculous future. The concept of progress that was instilled to lasting effect in this younger generation after the war was an idealistic, undialectical one of continual improvement, in which all obstacles can be surmounted by an effort of will.

As Mitzig privately recognises in an audience with his boss Hasenhuber, progress has been divorced from real social needs and has become an end in itself. But it is also a matter of survival for the bureaucrats to keep 'their train' going, regardless of the fact that it has no destination, for in Hasenhuber's brutal words 'Wer aussteigt, bricht sich das Genick. Notbremsen fehlen' (p. 160).

Körner refutes the idea, propagated by such writers as Erik Neutsch in the 1960s and 1970s, that progress is an ever-improving series of triumphs and shows it to be a highly contradictory and ambivalent process. The author even emphasises the negative side of rural change and neglects the undoubted positive side: raised agricultural

production, a higher standard of living and a sense of pride among the villagers that Wuttkow has been placed on the map. But the simplistic concept of smooth, rapid development through technology is proved false and has itself been a key cause of the destruction of the village's natural surroundings and way of life, for which no adequate replacement is built up.

The outlines of an alternative model of development can be inferred *ex negativo* from the mistakes described in *Die Totenkeule*. A democratic means of proceeding is necessary in order to avoid the concentration of power in the bosses' hands and allow the talents and experience of all sorts of people to come into play. In this case it is the ordinary farmers in particular who should have formed the basis of the new collective, in Marlene Mitzig's words: 'Du hättest auf solche wie Juschko bauen müssen, auf die Bauern und nicht auf so einen wie den Hein' (p. 159). One must adapt the existing structures rather than attempting to tear them down and construct a new society on the ruins. The effects of technological, constructional or social changes on the environment and the community should be thoroughly assessed beforehand, monitored and corrected. A genuinely rational economic system would allow individual initiative and cut down on waste. Not least, ignorant public attitudes towards nature need to change. Events have passed it by, but *Die Totenkeule* as a political book yields lessons from the

GDR's recent past which could have assisted its future progress.

If Körner's figures of authority are would-be heroes, Sieghart in *Der Kirschbaum* typifies a genuinely heroic but outdated outlook reminiscent of the dam-building era of both Stalin's industrialisation and Roosevelt's New Deal. He sees his pioneering work, preparing virgin land for the march of progress, as a great adventure in which man can prove himself (p. 39). Sieghart proclaims his boundlessly arrogant, quasi-religious faith in man without even the specious logic of Mitzig's 'therefore' (see p. 178 above): 'Der Mensch richtet alles nach seinem Ebenbild ein. Nach seinem Geschmack. Er nimmt den Göttern die Zügel aus den Händen [...].' Human needs, as defined by the experts, are taken as the overriding end, while the natural conditions are merely obstacles on the way to its fulfilment: 'Was sollen wir machen, wenn alles ziemlich unzulänglich eingerichtet ist' (p. 41). It is painful for the man of action to entertain Ena's opposite, contemplative view of the world. Here we see the constant unrest within the human mind, never satisfied with the 'boring' state of things as they are, which drives change (pp. 46-8). Sieghart, like Mitzig, believes that everything can be understood, including his wife: 'Nichts kann sich auf die

Dauer dem Verstand entziehen.' Ena's reply, 'Nein [...]. Du wirst mich nicht verstehen. Du hast zu viel Verstand' (p. 114), is borne out by the abiding mystery of this *Novelle*, which cannot be rationally resolved. Sieghart's basic concept of progress, like that of his counterparts in *Die Totenkeule*, is the improvement of the world by man's ingenuity and effort for man's own benefit, but it is individualistic rather than collectivistic. This also constitutes a difference between Sieghart and the positive hero of Socialist Realism. As in 'Die Schmerzen der auslaufenden Art', Koch is aware of the psychological roots of the problems of 'progress' beneath the political surface.

The author also makes us painfully aware of the enormous costs of forced modernisation, especially the plight of people hurt rather than liberated by the process. Klaus Hammer, writing in 1985, puts it with a degree of caution:

In Leit- und Warnbildern treten die Konturen eines Menschenbildes hervor, in dem sozialer Fortschritt nicht ohne weiteres mit menschlicher Selbstverwirklichung gleichgesetzt wird.²⁷

Koch himself is more radical than this, questioning the very purpose and humanity of 'human progress' when he shows Ena's fear of climbing further up the steps leading

to Civilisation:

Sie hatte Angst, weiterzugehen, denn das Ende des Aufstiegs war nicht zu sehen, und sie befürchtete, dort oben, wo die Präsentation des menschlichen Fortschritts zu erwarten war, könnten keine Menschen mehr sein, nur noch Fortschritt. (p. 119)

The tragic conclusion with the deaths of the grandfather, Ena and Sieghart is the poetically consistent outcome of the clash between the unstoppable force of progress and the immovable object of the peasant world.

Koch has established that in principle the new and the traditional annihilate each other, but does that mean that progress is impossible and that a return to the bucolic past is the only way out? The conciliatory conclusion of his 'Landvermesser' (1975), in which the representatives of the old and new worlds manage to save the old loom for their modern flat, is no longer credible, but the extreme case in *Der Kirschbaum* still leaves some room in the real world for a less antagonistic course of events, if only people heed the warning. The book teaches that progress cannot be simply equated with the new as such, the technological correction of the world's 'inadequacies' or the achievement of a prescribed target. Progress must be

suited to the world in all its natural and cultural complexity, it should improve people's lives, and losses of all kinds must be weighed up before a potentially gain-bringing change. Embracing, if only as an ideal, both the activism of Sieghart and the conservatism of Mathias, 'Wirklich menschlicher Fortschritt kann nur als dialektischer Prozeß verstanden werden, er gründet in einer Wechselbeziehung zwischen Tradiertem und Neuem' (Jürgen Hauschke)²⁸

Respektloser Umgang, published between the other two books in time, takes the argument about progress further than *Der Kirschbaum* and *Die Totenkeule*, which both expend much effort revealing the failure of the functionaries' simplistic notion. Königsdorf dispenses with this stage, proceeding instead from the knowledge that 'progress' is already widely discredited in the world. The author takes it for granted that the scientific and technological process has two sides, the accumulation of destructive weapons and the exhaustion of natural resources on one hand, life-giving inventions and the sheer joy of discovery on the other. The 'harmonious scenarios' which once envisaged 'Jedem der gleiche Autotyp' are merely past dreams, and the narrator and her friends now converse knowingly about coming disasters (pp. 19-20). The narrator herself at her most sombre pictures man, called 'der moderne Prometheus' in allusion

to the subtitle of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, not as the ingenious hero of Greek myth and communist tradition²⁹ or even as the tragically thwarted creator of the monster, but as a wretched figure who even in an implicitly godless world does not have the moral stature to take responsibility for the consequences of his acts (p. 78).

The facile optimism of previous decades is discarded and grave questions are raised about the institutionalisation, misuse and end effects of science, but Königsdorf, with a foot in both the scientific and the literary camps, differs sharply at this stage from those writers (e.g. Wolf or Cibulka) who are sceptical towards science. The passage already quoted on p. 114 above (*RU*, p. 93) states in no uncertain terms that in view of the limitations of the material world, human survival can only be guaranteed by the acquisition and utilisation of new knowledge. Earlier on, the narrator expresses the desperate wish that the 'pains' afflicting humankind should alert it to the 'Kräfte [...], die den Fortschritt verderben, daß man ihn nicht einmal mehr zu benennen wagt' (pp. 69-70). Progress is shown to have serious drawbacks, but it remains an essentially sound enterprise if the attendant risks and constraints are understood.

In the face of all-embracing global danger, development requires a new ethical orientation. What is

stated in 'Das Prinzip Menschenwürde' is already implied in *Respektloser Umgang*: the responsibility for human life and dignity will have to be the criterion of future progress. Many old habits need to be overcome: unattainable illusions of a perfect world; prejudices which restrict the advancement of certain people, e.g. women in science; authoritarian structures; the orientation towards goals while people are reduced to instruments employed in their achievement. Progress must proceed in a more caring and 'feminine' spirit, informed by caution and a sound knowledge of the dangers. The narrator (i.e. the author) even provocatively suggests in the Prometheus passage that the pace of progress ought to be controlled: 'Ist es nicht besser, etwas langsamer voranzugehen und den Überblick zu behalten? Ich weiß nicht. Ich sehe keine andere Chance' (p. 79). Even here, though, the necessity of moving forward is upheld. Königsdorf's intellectual challenges to both the friends and the opponents of conventional 'progress' merited wide discussion, but, with a few exceptions, the response from critics in the GDR was hesitant and generalised.

The three books under discussion agree on the falsity of 'harmonious scenarios' and show that progress really proceeds dialectically, bringing loss as well as gain. While *Der Kirschbaum* and *Die Totenkeule* analyse the failings of 'progress' and the gap between ideal and

reality, *Respektloser Umgang* goes beyond a negative critique and establishes the human need for further scientific-technological progress, albeit of a new kind. All the works allow the inference of broad alternative standards for a progress which satisfies human needs and is accountable to people. The humanistic concern (for real people, not for a heroic abstraction called 'man') is strong in the first two books but overriding in *Respektloser Umgang*. The notion that nature lies at the disposal of wise and powerful man gives way to a recognition of the complexity of the one and the limitations of the other, who must tread with care. These ideas may sound tame in comparison with the hostility to 'progress' shown by radical West German greens in the 1980s, but they were a substantial challenge to such simplistic official views as the Environment Minister's assertions at the 1987 Writers' Congress that the (unchanged) objective of economic growth could be combined with an ever more careful utilisation of nature.³⁰

6. The central contradiction

The plots of all three works under discussion can be seen as possessing a dialectical structure: in each case two different worlds interact, driving the action forward and giving rise to a new state of affairs. In *Die Totenkeule* and *Der Kirschbaum* this dialectic reflects the effects of modernisation on the countryside, while in *Respektloser Umgang* (where no equivalent objective conflict is present) it takes the form of the development of an individual conscience. Despite this difference in character, an overall analysis of the opposing lifestyles, values and persons in the two worlds and of the course of the dialectic can in each case reveal implicit views on the hopes of future development.

The traditional world of Wuttkow in *Die Totenkeule* is revolutionised by the world of progress, and a radically altered village emerges from the conflict. The traditional party are thoroughly rural and close to nature, as peasants have to be. They are content to continue in the accustomed ways which seem to guarantee a safe future, working (and living) with simple techniques on a small scale, treating work and life as an organic whole. Life in such a traditional community is slow, socially close-knit and rewarding, although restricted in

the past by class inequalities. The people of the village in the main care for the land and each other and consider their actions. The majority of them stand, as always, at the bottom of local society, while Mitzig has climbed to the top of the hierarchy. He is the protagonist of the progressive party, whose model is the modern city and who view nature instrumentally. They are determined to improve things by the introduction of complex techniques on a large scale and by the specialisation of labour. The new lifestyle is pleasurable, but fast, alienated and superficial. The official representatives ignore the effects of their acts and idolise a narrow kind of rationality.

'Progress' and 'tradition' are the two poles of the magnetic field in which the characters live and act (while remaining distinct personalities rather than mere personifications of principles). Mitzig, the transformer of the world and formal hero, stands at the former point, Juschkon, the determined adherent of the good old ways and informal heroine, at the latter. The others stand between these poles and sometimes move position; for example, eventually the cautious Littig, horrified when Mitzig deliberately lets slurry into the stream, breaks off the friendship and gives up his official post (pp. 188-9). A large group of characters, including the Juschkos, the LPG chef, the old peasant Blaschke, the

mayor, the policeman, the postmistress, the publican and even the younger Pollke, all maintain the old village community. On the opposing side stand Mitzig and some unprepossessing townspeople: Hasenhuber, Hein and the dairy girls. These rather negative figures are counter-balanced by a small positive group of urban origin or with modern, enlightened attitudes: Mitzig's former girlfriend Johanna Strauch, Halber the engineer (based on the author's younger self) and Fänniger the bookkeeper, the last two of whom oppose Mitzig's economic and ecological mistakes. Littig and Marlene Mitzig are ambivalent figures: like Mitzig himself, local people who nonetheless support the changes; loyalists who grow doubtful (while Littig's wife is a comic character with a finger in every pie). The central contradiction, which is as much a question of authority as of progress and tradition, is played out collectively in the life of these villagers, with Mitzig as chief actor.³¹

In accordance with the model of classical drama noted by Marianne Krumrey, the hubris of Mitzig, who has placed man in the gods' stead and made himself into a tyrant, leads rigorously to his downfall. By proceeding with an ambitious programme of silo construction against the wishes of his patron Hasenhuber (p. 174) he overreaches himself and falls into isolation and despair when everything comes apart. Like Ole Bienkopp, Mitzig dies an ambiguous death which may be accident or suicide

but which betokens unbearable strain. His fatal fall from the middle oak tree is caused by his desperate attempt to prove his manhood at last by carving his name and driving a nail into the top of the tree (p. 201), which young Pollke had prevented him from doing as a boy (p. 7). Read in a wider than individual sense, the fate of the twisted would-be hero, brought down by his own arrogance, symbolises the failure of the flawed heroic model of progress as a whole.

The fact that noone is willing to follow tradition and help dig Mitzig's grave indicates his unpopularity in the village. Censorship meant that this point had to be made implicit,³² but some reviewers were still able to infer it.³³ Nonetheless, after Mitzig's death the Wuttkowers take him to heart as part of their 'history': 'Was wären wir ohne Mitzig, sagt Frieda' (p. 204). The penultimate bar-room scene in which the villagers laconically take stock of the KAP chairman's achievements, which evidently include good as well as bad, finally rounds off this period in Wuttkow's, and by extension the GDR's, history. 'Socialist' society and ideology having failed, the stage of development that has been reached calls for a new philosophy, just as Halber with obvious symbolism feels the need for a new *Philosophenstein* in view of the decay of the old one, where Johannes Mitzig once imparted his naive socialist

ideals to his son (p. 14). The novel ends at a time of uncertainty about the future, but implicit pointers have already been given as to what the required - and perfectly possible - 'new philosophy' might embrace: the understanding of nature, mutual support and horse sense of the old rural lifestyle without the aversion to change; the legitimate wish to improve society which lies at the base of Mitzig's discredited socialism; and the values of democracy and responsibility which were so lacking in its practice.

The plot of *Der Kirschbaum*, like that of *Die Totenkeule*, is structured by a contradiction between 'progress' and 'tradition', but here it extends into a fundamental, in fact ideal, conflict between opposing principles which are embodied in the main characters in an almost mythical way. The representative of progress is Sieghart, whose adventurous spirit is shared by his colleagues in the drillers' camp and whose careerism is supported by his boss. The *savoir-vivre* of the Parisians puts modern civilisation in a more attractive light. Traditional values suffuse the lives of the farmstead-dwellers: Mathias, the master of the house, Ena, who breaks out of the closed circle, the stereotypical mother figure and the uncanny grandfather. The *Braschka* and the two blind musicians are further representatives of the older generation. There are several undeveloped minor

characters, such as the villagers who take part in the celebrations, but the central contradiction works itself out essentially in the relations between Sieghart, Mathias, Ena and the grandfather.

The two worlds bear more universal values than the two poles of *Die Totenkeule*. At base, Mathias stands for 'das Evolutionäre, die Kontinuität der menschlichen Entwicklung', whereas the programmatically named Sieghart represents 'das Diskontinuierliche, das revolutionäre Moment der Geschichte'.³⁴ He and his relatives stand for 'masculine', dynamic values that place human ingenuity above the preservation of nature: 'Suchen und fündig werden. Verändern. Die Erde anzapfen. Meere erschaffen. Ein bißchen Gott spielen' (p. 46). As in *Die Totenkeule*, 'progress' means technological change, large-scale organisation and an urbanistic lifestyle which offers superficial excitement and friendliness at the price of isolation and spiritual impoverishment. Ena and her family, on the other hand, believe in 'feminine', cooperative values; they respect the authority of the elemental powers and live in tune with nature: 'Ich, sagte sie, erschaffe nichts. Nehmen, was vorhanden ist. Weitergeben, was man selbst erhält' (p. 46).³⁵ The traditional rural lifestyle is simple, slow-moving but also restricted and offers a wealth of deep experience and close social ties. The ways of thinking of Sieghart

and Ena are opposed, on the one hand an objective observation of the world, which is rationally and amorally analysed for its usefulness, on the other a subjective, intuitive perception of the world as consisting of meaningful images drawn from myth. Beatrix Langner has established that 'das konstruktive oder strukturelle Sehen' of Sieghart and 'das bildhafte Sehen' of Ena influence the viewpoint of the text; the former dominates Sieghart's stay at the farmstead, the latter sets in after his departure.³⁶ Seen through the stranger's eyes, this remote spot and its inhabitants come across as eerie, but after he has left, their life, seen through their own eyes, appears quite natural.

The conflict between the opposed forces inevitably follows a tragic, deathward course. This development, centring on the Ena-Sieghart relationship, is described in a more intense, personalised and emotional fashion than the rise and fall of Körner's protagonist in his village. Ena and Sieghart are drawn together by their differences, but this attraction is mixed uneasily with repulsion. Even in their happiest times together Ena is disturbed by apparitions of Mathias, and the bonds are finally snapped by the Siwa incident. The country girl, a warning for the culture she represents, proves unable to survive in the modern world, whilst the man of action marches mechanically forward to his own destruction. Their deaths are a victory for the vengeful spirits of

the past, the dark side of the 'Märchen' invoked by Koch in 'Da sah ...', over the apostate worshippers of the 'Apparate'. 'Ich bin der Grund, der Anfang, das Erste, der Sinn, Anfang und Ende, das Muster, Kindheit und Heimat. Ich bin das Weißtdunoch' (p. 139), says the shade of Mathias in their final encounter. The nostalgia for childhood in the 'Da sah ...' passage is transformed here into a sinister claim over the grown-up person. The speaker is both affronted deity and rejected lover, which indicates the proximity of the narrative and mythical levels in this text.

Neither side in the conflict of ideas is by itself productive, and the interaction of the two sides leads to the destruction of their human representatives. An obvious interpretation, reversing the optimism of Marx, is that the worldwide struggle between progress and tradition/nature will produce the same result, that the lapidary 'Das war alles' which concludes the story refers to the end of humankind as well as individual deaths. But the return of the storks and the last blooming of the cherry tree before the end do hint that there is a very fragile hope of new life and movement emerging from the apparent stasis left when the progress-tradition contradiction has worked itself out.

The sustaining contradiction of *Respektloser Umgang*

is to be found in the narrator's personally encouraging encounters with Lise Meitner, which originate, according to the unearthly visitor, from 'eine unwahrscheinliche, doch mögliche Kollision zweier Traumwelten, die den Gesetzen von Raum und Zeit nicht unterworfen seien' (p. 10). Since, however, Meitner's claim to be the emissary of the spirit world is negated by the obviously drug-induced origin of the hallucination, it makes more sense to follow the rational implications of the text and interpret this central contradiction as an interaction of the narrator's real and imaginary worlds, both filtered by her subjectivity in the text.

The two principal characters, the narrator and Lise Meitner, are not opposites like Sieghart and Ena. In spite of the differences of time, experience and character the two superficially opposed figures are both women and scientists, and the real historical character behind the literary/imaginary Meitner makes her just as authentic as the narrator, who owes much to the author's own experience. They are further linked by 'irrationale Bezüge',³⁷ Meitner's flight from Germany on the day of the narrator's birth and the occasion in 1958 when the young physics student actually saw the veteran scientist.

Heinz-Jürgen Staszak describes how the introduction of the Meitner figure allows the drawing of parallels between her and the narrator and the narration of global problems: the nuclear threat and the responsibility of

science for that; the problems of male and female assimilation of the world; the problems of the assimilation of history.³⁸ The reader is granted a historical view of women's issues, science, nuclear weapons and even human evil and is enabled to make comparisons with the present. These topics cause the fictive narrator - and, it is evidently intended, the reader as well - to reflect further on the value of progress and on the dangerous situation of all humankind. Although it does convey a definite message, *Respektloser Umgang* allows readers more scope to come to their own conclusions than *Der Kirschbaum* and certainly than *Die Totenkeule*.

Lise Meitner is not only an example of global problems and an instrument for dealing with them,³⁹ according to Staszak, but also a 'halluzinierter und historischer wie [...] persönlich-aktueller Kommunikationspartner'.⁴⁰ The narrator, suffering from depression on account of her physical illness, needs a fixed point to relate to, which she finds in the human shape of this historical figure. While the collision between the traditional and the modern worlds in *Der Kirschbaum* and *Die Totenkeule* leads to a tragic ending, the interplay between the 'real' and 'imaginary' levels of *Respektloser Umgang* impels the narrator towards a constructive conclusion. Her rapprochement with Meitner, which

proceeds in fits and starts from rationalisation of the phenomenon (p. 10) to literal identification with Meitner (p. 71),⁴¹ allows her to look back over her life, to recognise her mistakes and her own past objectification of other people. Coming to terms with herself is a source of new strength for the narrator, enabling her to see her illness in a positive light and to accept the 'mission' passed to her by Meitner, to promote the continuity of (human) life, which is also the author's message to the world: 'Unsterblich sind wir, solange diesem Leben Kontinuität beschieden ist' (p. 116). The dialectic of reality and imagination works to produce hope in the face of deadly personal and global threats. The concluding swallow image resembles the symbol of cherry blossom on the water in *Der Kirschbaum*, but the former emphasises the tenacity of continuing life, the latter the transitions of death and birth.

The conflict of new and old occupies a central, motive position in *Der Kirschbaum* and *Die Totenkeule*, but in *Respektloser Umgang* the flow of history cannot be so easily assigned to two poles. The worlds which meet in this case are the real and the imaginary, the everyday life of a present-day woman scientist and the imagined presence of a great predecessor. In both the rural stories, the overweening pride of the main proponent of change destroys him and much else besides. The mutual

annihilation at the end of *Der Kirschbaum* leaves just a flicker of hope for the future, but in *Die Totenkeule* there seem to be better prospects for the emergence of a new way forward. The moments of 'continuity' and 'change' are ill-matched in the latter and antagonistic in the former, but in *Respektloser Umgang* they are allowed to combine fruitfully. This work attempts to counter the trend in GDR literature of the 1980s which, in alerting its readers to a comprehensive threat, can leave the impression of a hopeless situation; for example, Königsdorf implicitly expresses disagreement with the pessimistic tone of Wolf's *Kassandra*, despite similarities in outlook, literary style and central characters. The defiantly hopeful message of *Respektloser Umgang* is therefore to be welcomed in this context.

7. Moral and ethical dimensions

The question of progress cannot simply be answered by the proposal of alternative ideas and practical measures. The previous chapter and sections 5 and 6 of this chapter have demonstrated that the writers under consideration agree that the new orientation (in whichever direction that may be) requires a rethinking of

conventional moral values where these are harmful to people or the environment. All three books contain a definite moral dimension, dealing, moreover, with the positions of characters who can stand for all of us. Besides the traditional moral questions of human behaviour, the actions of the figures shed light on the question of how the individual should conduct his/her life so as to guarantee the survival of the human species. In this section I use the terms 'ethics' and 'ethical' to refer to a form of morality which is thought-through or set down as principles; we see this approach in *Respektloser Umgang* as opposed to the implicit presentation of moral questions in *Der Kirschbaum* and *Die Totenkeule*.

Die Totenkeule in effect fleshes out the democratic views on power and responsibility given in 'Fragen eines schreibenden Abgeordneten'. Heiner Mitzig is someone who oversteps the limits on human behaviour set by village custom. Ignoring the advice of the 'people' themselves and his own conscience, he lets himself be guided by dreams and ideology and carried along by the pressures bearing upon him as a powerful office-holder. This provincial example points out the corruption engendered by the authoritarian structures of state socialism, so that a poor man who set out with the intention of improving his fellows' lot can become an all-powerful

boss on whose favour his underlings depend. The modernisation of the village replaces firm traditional values with the anomie and spiritual alienation of 'der lange Hein', while the social system discourages people from thinking independently or taking on responsibility. Halber's remark that 'Die Verantwortung des einzelnen entscheidet. Lahmarschigkeit kann Hunderttausende kosten' (p. 177) reaches beyond the incompetence of the *Futterbrigadier* to touch the fatal shirking of responsibility by Mitzig and his stratum. This eventually brings about Mitzig's downfall in the fiction and was in reality to lead to the overthrow of party bureaucrats in 1989.

The message of responsibility and accountability applies in the environmental as much as in the political, social and economic spheres. Mitzig's dogmatic assertion of 'rational' man's supremacy over nature has an intellectual history stretching back to the Book of Genesis, but its falsity is evident from the ecological damage, with consequent harm to the food supply, that the agricultural projects inflict. This case demonstrates the responsibility that people of all ranks bear for the protection of nature and the environment, which is actually a safeguard of their own survival. Some characters do act conscientiously to prevent Mitzig's mistakes, whether their objections are motivated by years

of farming experience (the chairman of the neighbouring KAP - pp. 151-2 - and Juschko), technical knowledge (Halber) or a meticulousness in work and hobby (Fänniger). Although they fail to convince the chief, their actions are worthwhile, laying the foundations for an alternative policy. The disastrous mistakes presented in this operative novel should prompt readers to think critically about what is done to nature and people in the name of high ideals, to recognise their own responsibility and to act accordingly.

While *Die Totenkeule* offers fairly clear-cut cases of moral choice, morality in *Der Kirschbaum* tends to be overwhelmed by the ambiguous elements: imagery and conflict between principles. Hammer says:

Das Rätselhafte von Kategorien wie Schicksal, Zufall und Notwendigkeit wird in Bildern aus der Welt der Sagen, Märchen und Mythen [...] sichtbar gemacht, aber nicht als prinzipielle Undurchschaubarkeit interpretiert. An der menschlichen Verantwortlichkeit für das eigene Schicksal wird festgehalten.⁴²

The first clause is true, but it would be more correct to add that the workings of fate are presented as inscrutable, even if they do follow a meaningful pattern. The lives of the characters seem to be directed by an

all-powerful destiny, above which they cannot rise (in spite of Sieghart's beliefs to the contrary). Or it may be implied that they could have realised their autonomy had they possessed the necessary insight or courage.

Sieghart shares Mitzig's arrogant belief in reason (in Sieghart's case 'Verstand' - *DK*, p. 114 - the intellectual power of the individual, rather than the 'Vernunft' of Mitzig - *DT*, p. 196 - which implies agreed standards among people) and the ability of man to reorder the world. Both of them ignore the interests of other people in the furtherance of their own careers. But while Mitzig's demolition of traditional standards enables a series of new goals, intended to help the people, to be set up beyond the old limits, Sieghart spurns myths and traditions, including the strict sexual morality of the provinces, because he recognises no natural or social constraints on human progress. This character does in fact display the 'reine wissenschaftliche Neugier' that he jestingly pretends to Ena is the reason for his presence in the area (p. 41), in the form of an amoral lust for the new.

Against the foolishness of this relentless greed, which is unsustainable in a finite world, stands the modest, upright ethos of the country people, who still see themselves as the custodians of the land rather than its conquerors. Although the contrast is simply drawn,

their traditional country values do offer a corrective to the destructive tendencies of technological civilisation. But the main achievement of *Der Kirschbaum* in the moral field is typically poetic, that it uses signs and symbolic episodes to invite the readers to examine their own consciences and actions.⁴³

The pronounced moral aspect of the individual humanism expounded in *Respektloser Umgang* has already been described in sections 4 and 5. The chief emphasis here will be placed on the ethics of science and technology, which are given a special and important status in this book. The example used is the unexpected expansion of knowledge in atomic physics in the first half of the twentieth century, which is illustrated in a human way with the help of documentary material arranged non-chronologically throughout the text. The fact that this research should have led unintentionally to the atom bomb provides a lasting example of the dilemmas which scientists can face. The author, moreover, has found a new literary approach to the danger of nuclear war, particularly acute when the book was written in the first half of the 1980s. This links present-day experience of the threat (as also in the diary section of Wolf's *Kassandra* and some chapters of Morgner's *Amanda*) with that of the scientists whose work made the Bomb possible (as in Heinar Kipphardt's play *In der Sache J. Robert*

Oppenheimer, 1964).

Respektloser Umgang shows how individuals, whether scientists like Lise Meitner or lay people like the narrator's father, can feel at the mercy of overwhelming forces which make any attempt at a moral stand futile. Seen in this light, the claim by the revenant Meitner that she deliberately led other researchers onto the wrong track as regards the fission of uranium atoms, so as to prevent the Nazis from obtaining this new energy source (pp. 109-14), is an all too human rationalisation by someone who cannot face up to her own powerlessness. However, it is equally legitimate to interpret it as a possible model for ethical action.

It is the latter - individual responsibility and action - that Königsdorf is promoting, while understanding fatalistic feelings. Heinz Kahlau with reason assigns the author's ideas to what was then (January 1989) called the 'New Thinking', a term associated especially with Gorbachev. This places the interests of humankind above any other interest and so makes each individual responsible for the existence of the species.⁴⁴ All of man's previous inventions have been used for 'Wohltat oder Vernichtung', in which respect the atomic 'gift of Prometheus' is no different from earlier ones (p. 78), but the scale and speed of developments nowadays, one can read from the book as a whole, give the

concomitant danger a new, global quality. The narrator, who confronts the imperilment of both humankind and her own existence, is a model of how people can face up to their metaphorical sickness. 'Angst aus Wissen' can provoke a 'Mobilisierung der Humanität' (p. 94) against one's own destructive tendencies.⁴⁵ This message of moral awakening is particularly important for natural scientists, like the central character's physics student son, with their tendency towards reductionism.⁴⁶ A purely scientific world-view ignores the unquantifiable factors in the human world. Prefiguring the more sophisticated argument of 'Das Prinzip Menschenwürde' (1989), which *inter alia* asserts the role of culture and ethics besides science as sources of values, the narrator declares programmatically:

Von der Würde des Menschen werde ich sprechen, die nicht aus naturwissenschaftlicher Kalkulation folgt. Von der Verantwortung, die er übernehmen muß, weil es zwischen Verantwortung und Mitschuld in Zukunft nichts mehr gibt. Mitschuld am Mißbrauch von Erkenntnis. Mitschuld am Abstempeln zu Untermenschen. Zu Objekten. Zu Megatoten. (p. 94)

This statement of every person's responsibilities leaves out the *unintended* effects of human activity, but it is at least strongly hinted in this book that the risks of

the scientific-technological revolution are of a special kind. A new feature of Königsdorf's analysis in 'Das Prinzip Menschenwürde' is the recognition of irreversible man-made ecological damage to the earth, which in *Respektloser Umgang* is confined to the instances cited in section 2 of this chapter.

With these restrictions, there is a deep concern expressed in *Respektloser Umgang* about the actual and possible effects of scientific progress. Furthermore, the associative, disjointed passages of internal monologue invite the reader to develop his/her own thoughts. In this way the narrator reflects on the new moral questions raised by human-directed biological evolution with its 'segensreich oder furchtbar' effects: 'Humanismus? Sentimentales Geschwätz für objektive Produkte der Evolution. Aber ... Ja, was aber?' (p. 48). The rational side of the narrator's mind prods the emotional side to think through its moral qualms, until Lise Meitner conveniently butts in and diverts the self-dialogue from this tricky question (even Königsdorf's ethical treatise 'Das Prinzip Menschenwürde' cannot reach a conclusion on this particular point).⁴⁷ Like Wolf, Cibulka and Brezan, Königsdorf investigates the gap between the moral immaturity of mankind and its advanced knowledge and technical capability, but she does not look on science with quite their misgivings. Although science

is a cause of the illness and part of the cure in both *Störfall* and *Respektloser Umgang*, Wolf's thoroughgoing scepticism is only partly offset by the positive strand of the brother's brain operation, whereas Königsdorf's narrator insists that science is necessary to save all our lives.⁴⁸ The author is pleading for a new ethical approach to our handling of science and technology, unconditionally respecting individual and collective human life above all else. On a broader intellectual level, this work breaks new ground in what Staszak calls 'die Suche nach einem neuen Verhältnis von Rationalität und Moralität, von Wissenschaft und Humanismus, von Objektivität und Subjektivität'.⁴⁹

The moral dimensions of these three books are very different, ranging from the rather undeveloped contrast of attitudes in *Der Kirschbaum* through the typical situations presented in *Die Totenkeule* to the developed ethical reflection of *Respektloser Umgang*, but they can be compared insofar as they embrace the same topics. There is a basic consensus against the high-handed treatment of people and nature and the abuse of power. But while Koch and Körner tend to recognise the value of traditional prohibitions in this regard, Königsdorf accepts it as legitimate to break them, if science and technology are subject to strict moral criteria. The three works demonstrate in different ways the

responsibility of the individual for the human race, *Die Totenkeule* and *Der Kirschbaum* concentrating on the ecological aspect of this topic, while *Respektloser Umgang* is concerned rather with the abuse of knowledge. Königsdorf's message of responsibility is reinforced by her express opposition to fatalism. In *Der Kirschbaum*, the main source of a new, conserving morality can only be the traditional values and beliefs of the village, but Körner casts his net wider, allowing people of all backgrounds to play their part in setting better standards pragmatically. Königsdorf seeks the broadest support of all for her ethic of individual humanism, from reflection, from imagination (including art such as *Respektloser Umgang* itself) and from the mobilisation of the humaneness latent in every person.

8. The spiritual dimension

My sample of GDR narrative prose has so far yielded several partial alternatives to the one-sided rationalism of Occidental civilisation: practical measures, new views of the world, new moral standards, the revival of old ways. These are derived both from the intellect and from the human being's emotional attachment to nature, other

people, work and the past. This section will specifically explore the latter, non-rational or what one may call the 'spiritual' dimension, embracing the realms of emotion, imagination and myth. In a movement away from the rationalistic bias of Socialist Realism, these elements were strongly developed in GDR literature from the late 1960s onwards by such writers as Christa Wolf, Franz Fühmann and Irmtraud Morgner. In the context of environmental protection, though, they can represent problems as well as solutions.

Die Totenkeule is unusual in environmental literature in its scepticism towards imagination, which is elsewhere, e.g. in Cibulka's *Swantow*, promoted as a liberating alternative to narrow rationalism. Unlike in *Der Kirschbaum*, the reinterpretation of folklore (e.g. the 'Totenkeule' custom, the tales about the *Philosophenstein* and the historical associations of the oak tree - p. 6) does not form a comprehensive view of the world. Rather, a number of individual motifs relate to the development of Mitzig, Wuttkow and the GDR in quite an obvious way. Even in its fictive context, folklore, like the church in Wuttkow, is essentially a factor fulfilling the social function of keeping the community together. A broadly spiritual dimension can, though, be seen in the villagers' empathy for plants, animals and natural cycles, and in their good-humoured

cohesion despite quarrels and great social changes.

It is paradoxical that the old-fashioned peasants should have a sober opinion of the changes wrought by progress, while Mitzig the rationalist is really motivated by the vision of an ideal world that his father, who for a farmer was an impractical dreamer, implanted in him as a boy. The land envisaged by Johannes Mitzig, where there is 'Gerechtigkeit für alle' and 'Gleichheit der Menschen' (p. 14), ought more accurately to be called Utopia rather than Atlantis, Plato's mythical island of great wealth and military power which was destroyed in a cataclysmic earthquake. But in trying to build this paradise on earth, which he identifies with the idea of a bright future put out by the Party, Mitzig becomes guilty of just such arrogance. The dream becomes a burden, even if it is an ironic exaggeration to call it 'Johannes' Vision', that is to say, an apocalyptic nightmare (p. 114). The collapse of Mitzig's empire replicates on a small scale the fall of Atlantis, and suggests that the (utopian) promise of a better world held out by both Marxism and scientific-technological progress will lead to disaster if the ideal takes precedence over reality.

Körner also exposes the falsehood of official metaphors used for propagandistic purposes, such as the image of progress as a speeding train or a ship sailing

to the new land of the future. The seafaring motif is introduced at Mitzig's first meeting with Hasenhuber, who has a model ship on his desk on which a red sail with the slogan 'Der Sozialismus siegt' is mounted diagonally. Mitzig's factual remark, 'Das kentert bei Seitenwind', is used illogically by Hasenhuber to prove that he lacks 'die Sicht von oben' (p. 27). When Mitzig does gain an overall view from above, though, his sensitivity to warning details vanishes. The pervasiveness of socialist seafaring metaphor in the GDR can be seen in the contradictory epithets of 'Schlachtschiff der Kultur' and 'sicherer Kompaß für die Kultur' given to the House of Culture (p. 119), and in the East German colloquialism of 'Erntekapitäne' for combine drivers (p. 152). With mildly satirical humour, Körner plays with the latter concept throughout his description of a large-scale harvest operation using combines of the FORTSCHRITT make. All in all, the realm of the imagination (Atlantis, the dream of sailing into the future - p. 45) is rendered questionable as a source of progress. It needs to be held in check by a responsible realism.

The spiritual dimension of *Der Kirschbaum* is much stronger and more positively valued than that of *Die Totenkeule*. It is primarily the domain of the social, natural and even supernatural forces resisting the onslaught of civilisation. The rational mentality of

Sieghart, who keeps his emotions under control, stands in stark contrast to the dominance of feelings in the lives of the country people: their care for nature; the bonds of love within the family; their enjoyment of life, which has not yet degenerated into urban hedonism; and equally justified are the negative emotions, Mathias's jealousy and anger at the *Polterabend*, the suspicion of the grandfather, Ena's inner conflict. However, the inherited quality of restraint prevents these people from overstepping the limits of a sustainable way of life. Like their ancestors, they perceive the world in a 'bildhaft' (Langner) or literally image-inative way, so that every thing, such as the abandoned stork's nest or the pondweed clinging to the *Braschka's* trousers, can be interpreted as a sign of how the world is constituted or a portent of the future. In Koch's romantic representation, the inhabitants of the wild country (heath) have never fully given up their pagan (heathen) beliefs, retaining ancient deities and elemental forces in a conceptual world shaped by a life close to nature. In a 1985 interview with Klaus Hammer which echoes ideas from 'Da sah ...', Koch defends his use of the 'mythic element' as belonging to the world of his characters and fulfilling a unique human need which technology and civilisation will never be able to satisfy. 'Der Mythos schert sich nicht um seine Bedrohung', the author boldly

asserts.⁵⁰ In *Der Kirschbaum*, myth accordingly plays a powerful role with modern relevance: it acts as the guarantor of the humane values handed down from the past to the materialistic, superficial present and reminds us that beneath the accoutrements of civilisation we are just as much a part of nature as our pagan ancestors. If, as Ena does, we foolishly ignore the warning voices (of literature, myth, conscience), we will perish like her.

In reply to the *Wassermann's* question as to who will win the war, the fairy-tales or the gadgets, the grandfather replies, 'Ich weiß nicht [...], ich hoffe, die Märchen. Es wird sonst öde auf unserer Welt' (p. 53). *Der Kirschbaum* characterises the natural, cultural and spiritual wealth that is being lost worldwide to the voracious but barren industrial society. In spite of his assurances in the Hammer interview that 'myths' will always survive, it is clear from both the *Novelle* and the essays that Koch is worried about this development. On the other hand, a victory for the fairy-tales, for the irrational, is a highly problematic outcome. It could mean a mass flight into fantasy, leaving the real problems untouched, or a reactionary return to the values of an idealised past (of which there are traces in Koch's work). The final chapter of the *Novelle*, in which the grandfather, Ena, Sieghart and the ghost of Mathias all meet their end, provides a negative variant: the

vindictive spirits of nature destroy friend and foe alike in a veritable *Götterdämmerung*, after which the peace of the graveyard reigns - but with a glimmer of new life. The harmonious conclusion of 'Landvermesser' being excluded in the later work, there remains Hauschke's positive interpretation (supported by 'Da sah ...'):

Sieg der Märchen, die für Phantasie, (sorbische) Dörfer mit eigenständiger Mentalität, Kultur, Kunst, Lebensweise ... stehen, kann nur meinen, deren Fortbestehen trotz der 'Apparate' und nicht ein Entweder-Oder.⁵¹

Although Sieghart claims to be rational, at heart his need constantly to move on to new challenges is just as irrationally motivated as Mitzig's. The urges of both men are associated with images of sailing and yearning for the distance, which in Sieghart's case lack even the concreteness of Mitzig's 'greifbare Ziele' (DT, p. 45) and dreams of a new society. In the long, psychologically revealing conversation at their second meeting, Sieghart boasts to Ena that everyone in his family has something to do with water: 'Bruder Kapitän, Vater war Brunnenbauer. Die Tiefen und die Weiten also. Sie haben's uns angetan' (p. 46). Thus Sieghart, who is in some way estranged from his own mother, and his male

relations bend the symbolically feminine elements of water and earth to their own will ('Die Erde anzapfen. Meere erschaffen'). The dubious adventure of this character's pioneering work is where his childhood wanderlust can find fulfilment. Ena's childhood wish to fly away with the stork⁵², unsatisfied at this point, also proves dangerous when fulfilled. In Koch's opinion, the imaginative, emotional side of the human mind, under increasing strain from technology, needs to be nourished now more than ever before, but one can infer from his works that it also has a destructive potential when clothed in rational garb and set free from the restraint of traditional values.

In contrast both to *Die Totenkeule* with its slant towards practical rationality and *Der Kirschbaum* with its spiritual bias, *Respektloser Umgang* achieves a synthesis of the rational and the imaginative. Königsdorf, maybe overemphasising the point, has said about her work as writer and scientist:

Schreiben ist für mich Erweiterung, wenn gar nicht Befreiung von der Einengung auf das streng Rationale, das bei aller Phantasie, die zur wissenschaftlichen Arbeit auch nötig ist, dort doch letzten Endes Richtschnur bleibt.⁵³

As a work of fiction, *Respektloser Umgang* has greater freedom to deal with complex issues than the treatise 'Das Prinzip Menschenwürde' or even a conventional essay would have, and the inclusion of a specifically imaginary level allows the readers more scope to play associatively with the global issues, the lives of the characters and their own lives than a purely realistic representation would do.

Imagination liberates the narrator personally. She is held captive by illness, the everyday routine, work, strained relationships with those close to her and the burden of her upbringing. The 'Realwelt' reported on the radio magnifies these pains onto a global scale: 'Sicherheit durch Abschreckung. Mehr Sprengköpfe. Mehr Raketen' (p. 12). But the 'Spuk' of Lise Meitner, caused by the thoroughly real agent of drug treatment, enables the narrator to look at herself from an objective vantage point, as it were, and recognise the baselessness of her subjective self-loathing. One can see here how reason and imagination, objectivity and subjectivity are profoundly intermingled, unlike Koch's basic separation of opposite qualities. As is noted by Bernd Leistner, the narrator achieves distance not only from herself, but also from the 'einlinig "getrimmten", naturwissenschaftlich zweckdienlichen Ratio' and from success-oriented social behaviour. As a counterpart to that, the

changes in her state of mind release 'eine unreglementierte, von der Abhängigkeit selbstischer Existenz gelöste Vernunft'.⁵⁴ Lise Meitner, the medium of these developments, can be seen as an emissary of the visionary's troubled conscience like the apparition of Mathias. But while Ena will not heed the sombre, intrusive message, which claims domination over her, the narrator of *Respektloser Umgang* comes gladly to accept the mission of spiritually liberating herself and others.

The narrator's imagination looks outward as well as inward, but it does not share the element of self-assertion in Sieghart's dreams of adventure or the dangerously deceptive nature of Mitzig's social fantasies. The hallucinations, including that of the narrator's father (pp. 74-75) and the trial in the underworld (pp. 87-90), force the narrator to confront her faults and forgotten unkindnesses and help her to find her way to new, more relaxed relationships with herself and other people, whom she accepts as they really are. This process, it must be said, also takes place on the more mundane level of the feelings.

It is human feelings that are the original, non-rational source of that 'human dignity' which Königsdorf takes as the supreme ethical standard. Unlike *Die Totenkeule*, *Der Kirschbaum* and *Störfall*⁵⁵, *Respektloser Umgang* does not suggest that the desire for knowledge or change which lies behind scientific-technological

progress is in itself harmful. Progress can be corrupted by irrational forces, 'Die Gier nach den Dingen, nach Macht, nach Ruhm' (p. 115), but it can equally well be guided by irrational forces which affirm life. A rational assessment of one's personal situation or the state of the world might be grounds for despair, but *Respektloser Umgang* shows that the 'mobilisation of humaneness' within one individual can achieve something, however small, towards banishing the 'Spuk', a name now applied to greed rather than the phantom of Meitner.

The liberating and ennobling role of imagination is stressed in this *Erzählung*, but what when it shades into myth or even self-delusion? A bold assertion of the value of the irrational is made by Lise Meitner when, interrupting the narrator's train of thought about human genetic engineering, she says, 'Die Rettung der Menschheit könne nur noch aus dem Bereich der Überwelt kommen.' This ambiguous formulation is defined more closely as what lies between heaven and earth:

Die Welt der Vorstellungen, Erinnerungen, Bilder, Träume, Erfahrungen. Von Generation zu Generation überliefert. Die Welt der unendlichen Möglichkeiten neben dieser einen Realität. Die Welt der Mythen und Märchen. (p. 48)

A diverse living heritage of culture, experience and fantasy is proposed here as a possible source of alternatives to a dangerously solidified reality, but it is the narrator's sceptical response that is typical of the predominant attitude in *Respektloser Umgang*. Untypically for the GDR fiction of the 1980s, 'Märchen und Mythen' play a far less important role here than do the more concrete familial and scientific traditions. Indeed, the word 'myth' is used in a dismissive sense when describing the acquisition of nuclear fire by the 'modern Prometheus' (p. 78) and the false belief that science can solve all problems (p. 93). The sceptical narrator recognises the extreme improbability of the Meitner figure's claims to have been sent from the next world and to have deliberately misled German nuclear physicists in the 1930s, for both of which there are better, rational explanations. Meitner's parting words about the factuality of the latter claim, 'Ist es nicht lediglich von Bedeutung, daß es wahr sein könnte' (p. 114) can be taken as either true or false: as fiction, Meitner's actions point out possibilities of acting against what seems to be dictated by fate, but it is nevertheless dangerous to mistake illusion for fact. The narrator's disbelief provides a corrective to the self-delusion of Lise Meitner. In *Respektloser Umgang* the unquantifiable spiritual world is the source of unreal truths and insatiable greed, but also of liberating

imaginative insights and the impulse to preserve life.

The three works relate the rational to the non-rational in strikingly different ways. *Der Kirschbaum* comes close to a conventionally 'aesthetic' opposition of heartless rationalism on one hand and the joyous, nature-loving, mythical vision of the peasants on the other, which is the cure for sick civilisation, but the dangerous side of the irrational is admitted too, whether it takes the form of a hankering for the past or a stubborn belief in progress. Although it shares the themes of town versus country and progress versus tradition, *Die Totenkeule* shows the 'spiritual' level from a different angle, allowing one to see not only the subjective motivation of the supporters of progress beneath their mask of rationality, but also the farmers' practical good sense beneath their rustic peculiarities. It is *Respektloser Umgang*, though, which provides the most differentiated and satisfying balance, demonstrating the liberating power of the imagination in a constrained situation and the humanising potential of the emotions, while the validity of the scientific world-view and the necessity of progress are confirmed. Nor does this book deny the unacceptable on both sides, the destructiveness of cupidity and hatred, the deceptiveness of illusions and also the inhumanity of pure scientific rationality.

9. Reception

The sharp political responses to the essays by Pietraß, Koch and Körner (see chapter 2 above) offer a partial insight into the literary strand of the GDR environmental debate of the 1980s. In these cases the authors were speaking out directly, indeed with greater boldness as the decade progressed, and the official responses to such criticism remained harsh up to 1989. The sympathetic reviews of 'Vom Vergehen der Arten' when published in *Windvogelviereck*, though, show the literary establishment giving a favourable response. This side of the debate comes to the fore when one studies the reception of fictional prose. In comparison with the overall reception of the essays, the reviews and criticisms of *Die Totenkeule*, *Der Kirschbaum* and *Respektloser Umgang*, works which of course express opinion indirectly, are more favourable and differentiated as well as being more numerous. All in all, the reception of narrative helps to give a broader picture of how the debate developed and how standpoints shifted in the course of the decade.

By 1989, *Der Kirschbaum* was accepted as a major work of GDR environmental literature. It was one of the works by contributors to the 'environment' issue of *neue*

deutsche literatur (November 1989) which were recommended in the introduction as worthwhile further reading.⁵⁶ In his *tour d'horizon* of 'Umwelt in unserer Literatur' in the *mitteilungen* of the Writers' Union (May 1989), Steffen Peltsch summarises the book's matter favourably as 'Ein Anachronismus, der sich neu gibt, trifft auf einen Traditionalismus, der sich neu bestätigt.'⁵⁷ Jürgen Hauschke's study of 1987 is likewise positive, but the original critical response of 1984-85, which Hauschke effectively summarises, was more mixed.⁵⁸ The aesthetically pleasing form of this *Novelle* and the central love story are praised by all reviewers, but there are greatly varying reactions to Koch's criticism of technological progress and his 'idyllic' depiction of traditional rural life (the former being omitted entirely by Dietmar Felden in *National-Zeitung*, 1985). From the original response, the most revealing phase, I have selected the reviews by Irmtraud Gutschke in *Neues Deutschland* (1984) and Marianne Krumrey in *Berliner Zeitung* (1985) as representing typical favourable and unfavourable viewpoints respectively, and the review by Beatrix Langner in *neue deutsche literatur* (1985) as giving a thoughtful, individual reading.

These three critics share a common appreciation of Koch's successful use of the *Novelle* form, the imagery and the moving love story. All, furthermore, recognise

the fundamental dualism or division on personal, social and philosophical levels within *Der Kirschbaum*. Beyond this core of agreement on the more literary aspects, though, they diverge in emphasis and opinion. While in Gutschke's harmonising interpretation the principles embodied by Sieghart and Mathias, the continuity and discontinuity in human history, are complementary and the artistic image unites opposites, Langner stresses the gap between the traditional 'pictorial' way of seeing the world and the modern 'constructive' way of seeing. Although Langner appreciates Koch's achievement in putting this contrast in a literary form, she does criticise the author for his lack of realism: he is said to use imagery so ambiguous that 'die Novelle bisweilen umkippt zur Parabel und visionäre Gespinste vor die wirklichen Begebenheiten und Ereignisse hängt' (p. 134). This is an exceptional point in Langner's review, but Krumrey goes further and makes similar aesthetic criticism reinforce ideological charges which will be described below. She criticises the depiction of Ena's world as idealised: 'In der Überhöhung hat Koch dieses Leben idyllisch verklärt, zeigt es als noch vorhanden, aber schon märchenhaft entrückt', but her comment also expresses a clear dislike of Koch's partiality towards the old-fashioned, rustic lifestyle.

When it comes to the central issue of progress, Krumrey makes her dogmatic opinions plain. The critic

acknowledges Koch's deep sympathy with the natural world untouched by technological civilisation but castigates him for denying the beauty of the modern, technologically determined way of life. This judgement, though, ignores the fact that Koch shows genuine beauty to exist in the Parisian lifestyle (*Der Kirschbaum*, pp. 122-26) as well as in that of the Sorbian village. Against the author's heterodox treatment of the progress issue, Krumrey sets out what seems to be an official line:

Daß der technische Fortschritt nicht nur Verlust, sondern - unter sozialistischen Bedingungen - auch und vor allem Gewinn bedeutet, auf andere Art dem Menschen zugute kommt und das Leben stärkt, wird hier zu wenig bedacht.

She further criticises the omission of the idea of work (supremely important in Marxism) and the representation of the central characters' life 'außerhalb unseres Gesellschaftssystems', which must have blurred the expected distinction between socialist and capitalist conditions. Rather than taking Koch to be an opponent of progress, Gutschke interprets *Der Kirschbaum* as supporting a differentiated concept of progress:

Fortschritt, das wollte der Autor unterstreichen, entsteht, insbesondere in der entwickelten sozialistischen Gesellschaft, aus der dialektischen Wechselbeziehung von Überliefertem und Neuem.'⁵⁹

Koch's concern to preserve what is valuable from the past (and point out losses) is legitimised in terms of future development. Unlike Krumrey and Gutschke, Langner does not adopt a specific line towards Koch's treatment of progress, but emphasises the theme that traditional ideas about ourselves and the world are growing outdated thanks to the effects of science and technology. However, Langner still recognises the continuing power of the archaic world in *Der Kirschbaum* and expresses appreciation of Koch's continuing work on the theme of the reshaping of reality - 'angesichts häufig ungestalter, unreflektierter Naturbeziehung des "modernen" Menschen, verantwortungsloser Zerstörung von kulturellen Traditionen' (p. 134).

When *Der Kirschbaum* was first published in 1984, Koch's concern to point out that 'progress' also damages nature and cultural traditions was accepted as legitimate by most reviewers, but they ignored the more radical questioning of the value of 'progress' itself. Krumrey, who did take this challenge seriously, responded in an antagonistic manner. The later critics Hauschke and Peltsch adopted the former approach, but now, in 1987-89,

the seriousness of the ecology/progress issue and the falsity of the old 'Sieghart' model of progress were freely conceded.

Unlike Königsdorf's theses on 'Das Prinzip Menschenwürde', which received acknowledgement in the *ndI* introduction, *Respektloser Umgang* is understandably not included under the heading of environmental literature either there or by Peltsch. It did, though, attract far greater and more positive critical attention in the GDR than *Der Kirschbaum*.⁶⁰ This is a sign that critics had become more willing to discuss a book dealing with sensitive issues, but much of the favourable response was directed rather towards its literary innovation and intellectual scope, and even the specific issues of science, responsibility and progress were at first just registered as part of a broader range of topics. Furthermore, Königsdorf's essentially favourable treatment of progress, if not of all its effects, offered fewer grounds for criticism than Koch's questioning of the process itself. From the critical response of 1986-88 I have selected the pieces: by Irmtraud Gutschke in *Neues Deutschland* (1987) from among the shorter, indeed more superficial, newspaper reviews; by Gunnar Müller-Waldeck, who shares a goodwill towards the book with the other four contributors to the (misleadingly titled) 'Für

und Wider' discussion in *Weimarer Beiträge* (1987); and by Heinz-Jürgen Staszak in *DDR-Literatur '87 im Gespräch* (1988) - this later scholarly article offers a much more thorough analysis of *Respektloser Umgang* than the earlier reviews and opinion pieces.

The acclamatory tenor of the East German critical reception is typified by Müller-Waldeck's conclusion:

Respektloser Umgang ist ein respektables Buch und fordert den respektvollen Umgang durch den Leser heraus, und das heißt: die lustvolle Mühe der genauen und feinfühiligen Lektüre. (p. 1351)

Both Gutschke and Müller-Waldeck mention the demand made on the reader to think for him/herself, with Gutschke further laying stress on the 'researching', intellectual nature of the book and Müller-Waldeck pointing out that the author has formed a wealth of divergent narrative elements into an elegant literary 'Gesamtbogen'. Staszak, though, goes further by seeing this new aesthetic structure ('discursive prose') as especially suited to the 'narration of global problems' from a subjective perspective (Joseph Pischel expresses a similar idea in his 'Für und Wider' article in *Weimarer Beiträge*, making the same link with *Störfall*). 'Erzählen globaler Probleme' is in fact the title and topic of Staszak's comparative study of *Respektloser Umgang* and *Störfall*.

The main themes addressed by reviewers, though, are the personal development of the narrator and the way she comes to terms with her life and environment. Gutschke explains adequately enough how the narrator overcomes her weakness by understanding the larger context of her life, which includes responsibility for the future. Müller-Waldeck demonstrates how the narrator's suffering is productively turned outward, and he underlines the central message that the meaning of life is life itself. Staszak makes similar points, but looks specifically at how the central character's 'self-research' and the introduction of the Meitner figure illuminate the global problems. In contrast with the allegedly exclusive self-contemplation in *Störfall*, the multiple connections of Meitner cause the narrator to turn outward, to make contact with individual, familial and human history, from which the mission of individual humanism can be worked out (p. 45).

Störfall is in fact judged rather more harshly by Staszak for its inward-looking and pessimistic character in comparison with the social commitment and optimism of *Respektloser Umgang*. He contrasts the central metaphors of the evolutionary 'blind spot' in *Störfall*, which is criticised for its orientation towards the past, and the 'mission' in *Respektloser Umgang*, which is orientated towards the future (pp. 46-48). Staszak prefers

Königsdorf's differentiated view of science to Wolf's dichotomy of rationalism and irrationalism (p. 50), the humanistic confidence that Königsdorf derives from her 'Blick auf das Soziale' to the blinkered supposition of Wolf's narrator that the development of science and industry simply results from a manic desire for knowledge (p. 52). Like Werner Jehser in *Weimarer Beiträge* (1987) and Heinz Kahlau in *Junge Welt* (1989), Staszak sees *Respektloser Umgang* as part of a greater search for a new ethic or 'new thinking' made necessary by the new, global threats. In keeping with the firmly Marxist standpoint maintained throughout, he stresses that Marxism provides the best starting-point (p. 53), but the search does indicate a growing openness to new ideas at this stage in the debate.

Gutschke too mentions the social dimension of *Respektloser Umgang*, the narrator's sense of responsibility for coming generations and for her past demands on people. As in her 1984 review of *Der Kirschbaum*, Gutschke interprets the author's ideas about progress in an officially acceptable way, though it is not so clear in this case whether she is defending a potentially controversial work. The reviewer quotes the author to prove that the use of science for people's good can only be ensured by the 'Mobilisierung der Humanität', not by Luddism. Königsdorf is said to be interested in how 'Sicherung des Friedens und Stärkung des Sozialismus' can

be expressed in individual action, but Königsdorf herself never uses such an official formula with military associations to express her own ideals of peace and socialism! Müller-Waldeck for his part acknowledges *Respektloser Umgang* to be a 'Warngeschichte von Format und Tiefe' and identifies key issues, such as the relationship of 'Geist und Macht', the responsibility of creative people for their creations and our treatment of the environment, but these lists lack depth.

In the 1986-88 reception of *Respektloser Umgang* overall we see a greater readiness to acknowledge the dangerous side of scientific and technological progress than in the main reception of *Der Kirschbaum* in 1984-85. The dogmatic opposition shown in Krumrey's review of *Der Kirschbaum* is absent, but Königsdorf's reservations about progress are even so interpreted in a conformist sense. Staszak's study of 1988 demonstrates that Königsdorf's limited criticism of progress was by then acceptable from an official viewpoint, but Wolf's radicalism was not. There was, though, a recognised need for new answers to new problems.

Die Totenkeule, like *Der Kirschbaum*, was recommended in the 'environment' number of *neue deutsche literatur* in 1989 and covered in Steffen Peltsch's essay, although the latter mention was unfavourable (see below). This book

had also merited a special discussion in the 'Aktiv Literaturkritik' of the Writers' Union earlier in 1989.⁶¹ One of the reported focuses of discussion was 'die Frage, wie Literaturkritik am Prozeß gesellschaftlicher Verständigung teilnehmen kann'; this opaque description probably refers to the fact that many reviewers neglected the socially critical aspects of the book in favour of its politically uncontentious rural colour, or at least toned down these aspects by balancing the losses and gains of progress. The majority critical response of 1988-89, with a few exceptions, was sympathetic but bland.⁶² For detailed analysis I have selected Steffen Peltsch's review from *Neues Deutschland* (February 1989) as being the frankest of the adverse ones and the criticism by Marianne Krumrey in *neue deutsche literatur* (June 1989) as giving a favourable but differentiated opinion. The latter article is backed up by Roland Müller's review from the *Schweriner Volkszeitung* (January 1989) as a further representative of the positive majority response.

The other main focus of the *Aktiv* discussion was the changed literary conceptions of younger writers, which are derived from experiences of reality different from those of older generations. It is Krumrey who shows most clearly that the similarities of Körner's work to that of Strittmatter and other writers of socialist village and *Aufbau* literature are not mere imitation, but that he is

distancing himself from that tradition by ironically varying its motifs. Most reviewers appreciate the relativisation of the more-or-less positive heroes of Strittmatter, Seeger or Neutsch in the figure of Heiner Mitzig, whom they call a 'Gegenmodell' to the 'Aufsteiger- und Siegertyp' from Fifties and Sixties literature (Krumrey, p. 138) or a 'Mann [...] des Mittelmaßes und des Kompromisses' (Müller). Peltsch, though, seems to cling to the concept of the positive hero: 'Die kritische Chronik wird zeitweise zur argen Satire und entwertet damit die Engagiertheit der Hauptfigur' (the tragic ending too disturbs him).

Körner's critical assessment of the achievements of socialism elicits the same divided response. Krumrey and Müller, standing for the majority of reviewers, judge that Mitzig has achieved a great deal but that the successes also have their dark side, some aspects of which they detail. Krumrey says that Körner 'versteht Fortschritt als widerspruchsvollen Prozeß, der Irrwege, Fehlschläge, auch zeitweilige Deformationen einschließt' (p. 138), but she covers herself by assigning the specific 'Irrtümer und Übertreibungen' described in *Die Totenkeule*, though not their implications, to a closed chapter of recent history:

Ein im wesentlichen abgeschlossener historischer Prozeß, zu dem sich die Jünger in Beziehung setzen müssen, weil sie mit den Folgen unerbittlich konfrontiert sind. (p. 139)

Körner's criticisms are interpreted by Krumrey as a constructive engagement with questions of power, democracy and progress. *Die Totenkeule* seems to have had a significant effect on this reviewer, setting her thinking about the high price of progress and making her determined to see fewer losses in future (p. 140). In this, Krumrey has radically changed her previous view, expressed in the review of *Der Kirschbaum* four years earlier, that technological progress (under socialist conditions) is above all a source of gain. Körner's critique of progress is basically accepted where Koch's was rejected. Peltsch, in contrast, criticises *Die Totenkeule* for one of the same reasons that Krumrey originally attacked *Der Kirschbaum*: the novel is 'provocative' and 'one-sided' because it discusses 'Verluste und Defizite' above all else. Peltsch's hostile comments on *Die Totenkeule* in the Writers' Union journal make his position plain:

Alles an Aussage indes, anders als bei seinen Vorbildern, [Strittmatter and Sholokhov] läuft auf eine Listung von verpaßten Gelegenheiten hinaus.

Ich meine, daß man es sich so einfach nicht machen darf, weil wir immer auch die anderen hatten. Und lernen nicht nur deklariert, sondern auch praktiziert haben.⁶³

Peltsch has some justification in regarding *Die Totenkeule* as a distortion of the truth, since it does exaggerate for satirical purposes, but the official truth he is defending is an equally partisan version. Peltsch did, though, praise *Der Kirschbaum* in the same piece. It may be that Körner's more openly expressed bias distracted the critic from the fact that the farmers in Wuttkow have just as commendable a relationship with their environment as do those in Koch's village.⁶⁴

Curiously, Krumrey detects a similar polarisation of truth to that described above in *Die Totenkeule* itself. The ominous socio-political division into 'above' and 'below' is reflected in the different truths that Mitzig and the 'people' believe in and in their different uses of language (pp. 139-40). Müller too recognises Körner's antithetical representation of village society as seen in the contrasting fates of the wealthy Pollkes and the poor Mitzigs, but Peltsch concentrates on the supposedly misrepresented 'hero' in isolation, thus neglecting the significant contrasts between Mitzig and others.

While the criticisms made by Peltsch are openly

ideological in character, those made by Krumrey are more typical of the critics' response in that this reviewer seeks an aesthetic rationale for her political objections to the novel. There appear to be no grounds for her claim, derived from Tilo Köhler's thoroughgoing attack on the aesthetics of *Die Totenkeule*,⁶⁵ that in the second half of the book Körner loses his initial mellifluousness and gives too dry a description of social and economic conditions in the Sixties and Seventies (p. 140). The probable reason for this criticism is Körner's unsparing satire on the GDR system, which has contemporary relevance in the later parts of the book. In this respect one could equally well cite the treatment of the figure of Hasenhuber by both Krumrey and Müller.

The critical response to *Die Totenkeule* in the GDR was diverse, ranging from Peltsch's sharp ideological distrust and Köhler's aesthetic disparagement, through the perceptive and generally favourable review by Krumrey, to Müller's high appreciation. More serious doubts about progress were expressed (by Krumrey) than in the previous cases discussed here, but in the first half of 1989 this spectrum did not yet reach far enough to allow full discussion of the book's radical implications for the GDR system. Even in a *Sonntag* interview of November 1989 in which Körner threw Peltsch's accusation of 'Einäugigkeit' back at him, he himself still felt it necessary to provide a socialist framework for his call

to rethink old values: 'Unser Sozialismus hat den Anspruch, eine Gesellschaft für morgen zu sein, das zwingt, heute die Konsequenzen zu ziehen [...]'⁶⁶ It was not until the following year that the author was able to call the socialist ideal 'eine Abart von einem Schlaraffenland' in the reformed East German media (*Börsenblatt für den deutschen Buchhandel*).⁶⁷ Here he spoke freely about the measures taken against his provocative novel: the censorship, the cancellation of public readings and serial publication in a newspaper, the ideological criticism disguised in aesthetic terms, even the unattractive blurb and dustjacket! But while the failure of DEFA to film Ulrich Plenzdorf's scenario of *Die Totenkeule* was probably politically motivated under the old regime, new commercial considerations had the same effect on GDR television after the *Wende*.⁶⁸

The critical response to *Der Kirschbaum* in 1984-5 slightly extends the theoretical limits of critique which Mallinckrodt has ascertained as existing by late 1982, using the example of Cibulka's *Swantow*. These include the tenets that 'Social and economic progress is possible through science' (and technology) and 'Under socialism, science serves humankind and society'.⁶⁹ While Krumrey criticised Koch when he broke these limits, Langner apparently regretted the absence of personal

environmental responsibility (what Mallinckrodt calls an 'acceptable' critique) and Gutschke sought to differentiate the concept of progress. The subsequent reception (Hauschke, Peltsch) showed an acceptance of Koch's warning about progress, even if the inclusion of the book in an incipient canon of environmental literature tended to render it harmless. *Respektloser Umgang*, which gives a balanced assessment of progress and is open to a system-affirming interpretation, met with a more uniformly favourable reception than *Der Kirschbaum* in this and other respects. The critics in 1986-87 could agree with Königsdorf that science must only bring benefit to people (Gutschke). Müller-Waldeck was content just to outline the contemporary issues, and Gutschke gave a politically safe interpretation. Over the period 1987-89 Königsdorf's subordination of scientific-technological progress to a new, humane morality was gaining supporters in the public debate (Jehser, Staszak, Kahlau), certainly more acceptable to Staszak than the scepticism of Christa Wolf. The reception of *Die Totenkeule* proves that even in 1989 there were still limits to open discussion: Peltsch censured the book and defended the record of GDR policies, while Krumrey sought to justify its radical exposures as constructive criticism. Krumrey's concluding doubts about progress still correspond in form to Mallinckrodt's finding that in 1982 'one could still

question whether the price of progress, in the sense of "well-being" or standard of living", had been too high'.⁷⁰

These substantial literary challenges to 'progress' could be published in the GDR of the middle to late 1980s without the interference that *Swantow* received, but the reviewers generally showed only a limited acceptance of the writers' criticisms of progress, with some critics adopting an antagonistic stance. The more radical aspects of the writers' criticisms were only gradually acknowledged and accepted. A satisfactory and diverse discussion, though still within limits, did not emerge until 1987-89.

10. Evaluation of the narrative approach

The analysis of *Die Totenkeule*, *Der Kirschbaum* and *Respektloser Umgang* confirms what was stated at the beginning of this chapter, building on Schuhmann's findings: that the portrayal of environmental problems within a specific social milieu in narrative prose creates opportunities to analyse the roots of those problems, and that this social context is realised in the form of characters to whom we can relate. There is a

clear difference here from essayistic prose, dealing more narrowly with the problems at stake, and lyric poetry, which generally concentrates on a small, meaningful extract from the broader context. But beyond this lowest common denominator, a narrative approach to environmental issues may display features more typical of other genres: *Der Kirschbaum*, like a poem, uses signs to alert the reader, while *Respektloser Umgang*, like an essay, contains many passages of reasoning and much factual material.

The exploration of the causes itself proceeds in different directions in different works. *Die Totenkeule* investigates the social, political and economic causes and conditions of the problems (with a feeling for the psyche of Mitzig); *Respektloser Umgang* the interplay of social, political and scientific factors on one hand and psychological factors on the other; and *Der Kirschbaum*, less successfully, the underlying principles and spiritual forces. All the authors attempt to understand the psychological roots of progress, but Koch, whose characters serve as embodiments of ideas, does not succeed as well as Königsdorf and Körner, whose figures remain human beings. Besides the research into causes and the allocation of guilt and responsibility mentioned by Schuhmann, these books show that even fiction can say something about how to cure environmental and other problems: Königsdorf makes suggestions towards a

solution, while approaches are visible in a concrete form in *Die Totenkeule* and in the more general sense of a different lifestyle in *Der Kirschbaum*.

If one compares the relative success of Koch and Königsdorf in coming to terms with the historically new threat of 'global problems', one might well conclude that Wolf was right in stating that a new way of being in the world necessitates a new way of writing. Koch chose to clothe a criticism of progress, which was still a new phenomenon in the GDR of the 1980s, in a traditional narrative form which demands consciously artistic composition and an element of distinctness from everyday reality. The choice of the *Novelle* form does allow familiar problems to be seen from a different, thought-provoking perspective from those of ordinary experience or the (Western) media, but the confrontation with the issues is also distanced and generalised by the form. The author may have chosen this route deliberately in order to present a controversial subject in an acceptable way.

In contrast, Königsdorf in *Respektloser Umgang* abandoned the distanced (through satire) style and linear narrative form of most of her earlier short stories in favour of a radical subjectivity and an innovative structure which are well-suited to express the situation of an individual in a multiply threatened world. The

structure composed of disparate elements further enables the reader to make connections between different aspects of this world. There is certainly a degree of sitting on the fence in Königsdorf's presentation of competing truths, but the issues are engaged directly and a direction given all the same.

The example of *Die Totenkeule*, though, shows that more established narrative forms can still address contemporary issues effectively. The novel's essentially objective and chronological third-person narrative is conventional, and many characteristic features of Körner's writing were already pioneered by Strittmatter in the 1960s. *Die Totenkeule* is, though, still written with enough flexibility to convey the experience of living in a village world subject to radical, new changes. The 'Totenkeule' principle, for example, is successful in bringing to light different attitudes towards these changes and the protagonist who effects them. These works show that a new way of being in the world can just as well be expressed in an evolutionary adaptation of existing forms and styles as in revolutionary innovation, but that a restrictive old form can hamper rather than facilitate the communication of a new consciousness.

As an articulator and changer of public consciousness, environmental literature forms part of a broader debate extending far beyond literary circles. In the GDR,

narrative prose writing played a particularly important role as against other media since, as Hubertus Knabe has said (1985),

Anders als in der Bundesrepublik ergänzt sie [die Literatur, but Knabe is specifically addressing 'erzählende Literatur' in this article] keine politische Diskussion, sondern muß sie gleichsam ersetzen und übernimmt dabei auch solche Aufgaben, die hierzulande kritische Wissenschaftler, Journalisten und Umweltschützer ausüben.⁷¹

As far as other genres are concerned, essays, poetry and drama were all directed at a relatively small and elite readership or audience. In the previous chapter we saw that the essays were in the first place intended for restricted audiences of writers and politicians, or in Pietraß's case for the readers of the literary journal *Sinn und Form*. Even then they appeared in print in literary publications. Out of the three genres of 'environmental' literature investigated here, narrative prose was probably the most important in terms of critical reception and wider public impact.

It was demonstrated in chapter 1 that environmental criticism achieved a breakthrough both in essays or public statements by writers and in narrative prose in

the years after 1979. The essays and public statements of the Eighties studied in chapters 1 and 2 attest to a gradual radicalisation of writers' views on the environment and a relaxation of self-censorship, accompanied by sympathy from critics and fellow-authors but by continuing opposition from official circles. We see the same radicalisation of authors if we compare the compromise between technological progress and tradition in Koch's 'Landvermesser' (1975, 1977) with the struggle to the death in *Der Kirschbaum* (1984), or the satire on everyday scientific activity in Königsdorf's *Meine ungehörigen Träume* (1978) and *Der Lauf der Dinge* (1982) with the direct confrontation with questions of scientific responsibility in *Respektloser Umgang* (1986). The critical responses towards narrative prose are generally favourable, indeed increasingly so with time, but there is a widespread tendency to present the writers' criticisms in officially acceptable terms. Both *Der Kirschbaum* in 1984-85 and *Die Totenkeule* in 1988-89 also attracted a small number of adverse, dogmatic reviews. It seems that while essays and public statements provoked interested parties to take sides in print, the published response to environmental fiction mostly took the form of routine, semi-official literary criticism.

Notes to chapter 3

1. Klaus Schuhmann, 'Lageberichte zur ökologischen Situation - Beobachtungen zur Lyrik der achtziger Jahre', in *DDR-Literatur '85 im Gespräch*, edited by Siegfried Rönisch (Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau, 1986), p. 42.
2. Peter Barker, 'Interview mit Jurij Koch', *GDR Monitor*, no. 21 (Summer 1989), pp. 49-58 (pp. 52-53).
3. Christa Wolf, 'Lesen und Schreiben', *Die Dimension des Autors* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1987), pp. 463-503 (p. 463).
4. Matthias Körner, *Die Totenkeule: Roman* (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1988). Jurij Koch, *Der Kirschbaum: Novelle* (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1984). Helga Königsdorf, *Respektloser Umgang: Erzählung* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1988). Originally published as *Respektloser Umgang* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1986). In the text the above titles will occasionally be abbreviated to *DT*, *DK* and *RU* respectively.
5. Jürgen Lehmann, 'Das erzählte Dorf: Anmerkungen zur Funktion von "Landleben-Literatur" in der DDR', in *Kontroversen, alte und neue: Akten des VII. Internationalen Germanisten-Kongresses Göttingen 1985*, edited by Karl Pestalozzi et al. (Tübingen:

- Niemeyer, 1986), vol. X, pp. 97-104 (pp. 102-03).
 Lehmann makes reference to Martin Stade, *Der Windsucher und andere Dorfgeschichten* (Stuttgart, 1984).
6. The author himself dislikes being pigeonholed with Strittmatter or seen as his imitator. See Hinnerk Einhorn, 'Der Bauer zählt die Küken am Abend', *Sonntag*, 44 (1989) 46, p. 7.
 7. Steffen Peltsch, 'Konterfei eines Dorfes in dunkel-erdigen Farben,' *ND*, 11/12 February 1989, p. 14.
 8. Marianne Krumrey, 'Aufbruch der "dürren Ziege"', *ndI*, 37 (1989) 6, pp. 137-40 (pp. 137-38).
 9. See Martin Swales, *The German Novelle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 30-34. In my comments on *Der Kirschbaum* as a *Novelle* I rely on the chapter 'The Theory of the Novelle' in *The German Novelle*, pp. 19-58, and on the introduction to *Die deutsche Novelle von Goethe bis Kafka*, vol. II, *Interpretationen*, Benno von Wiese (Düsseldorf: August Bagel, 1962), pp. 9-25.
 10. Wiese, *Die deutsche Novelle*, p. 22.
 11. Christa Wolf, *Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung: Kassandra: Frankfurter Poetik-Vorlesungen* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1983), pp. 114-15.
 12. Dieter Schlenstedt, 'Entwicklungslinien der neueren Literatur der DDR,' *Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, 10

- (1988) 1, pp. 5-23 (pp. 17-19).
13. The metaphor was used first by Christa Wolf: 'Warum sollte das Gehirn, das doch oft mit einem Netzwerk verglichen wird, die Erzählung einer linearen Fabel besser 'behalten' können als ein erzählerisches Netzwerk?' Wolf, *Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung: Cassandra*, p.117.
 14. Heinz-Jürgen Staszak, 'Erzählen globaler Probleme', in *DDR-Literatur '87 im Gespräch*, edited by Siegfried Rönisch (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1988), pp. 26-57 (pp. 34-5).
 15. Though 'global problems', the threat of nuclear war and scientific responsibility in *Respektloser Umgang* are discussed by Heinz-Jürgen Staszak (see previous note); by Nancy A. Lauckner, 'The Treatment of the Past and Future in Helga Königsdorf's *Respektloser Umgang*: "Sich der Erinnerung weihen oder für die Zukunft antreten? Mit der Vergangenheit im Bunde"', in *Studies in GDR Culture and Society 10*, edited by Margy Gerber (Lanham, New York, London: Univ. Press of America, 1991), pp. 151-64; and by Jeanette Clausen, 'Resisting Objectification: Helga Königsdorf's Lise Meitner', in *Studies in GDR Culture and Society 10*, pp. 165-80.
 16. Though Königsdorf herself was brought up in a village, as is revealed in the essay 'Thüringen, du mein lieb Heimatland', *Aus dem Dilemma eine Chance*

- machen: Reden und Aufsätze* (Hamburg and Zurich: Luchterhand, 1991), pp. 35-43.
17. Günter Kunert, *'Flaschenpost', Zurück ins Paradies* (Munich: Hanser, 1984), pp. 137-50.
 18. See for example Martin McCauley's *The German Democratic Republic since 1945* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1983) for the historical background.
 19. See Peter Wensierski, *Ökologische Probleme und Kritik an der Industriegesellschaft in der DDR heute* (Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1988), pp. 154-219, for the ecological problems of industrial agriculture. The factuality of Körner's description can be judged by Wensierski's documentation of the same environmental problems caused by intensive agriculture: the loss of soil fertility due to inadequate provision of organic substance; the use of machinery, the enlargement of fields and irrigation (or at least sprinkling) in unsuitable conditions; excessive use of slurry and artificial fertilisers on fields, leading to water pollution; high, unsustainable increases in production achieved by chemical means; the severing of ecological connections between plant and animal production; animal health, human health and pollution problems arising from the mass holding of livestock; the loss

of wild species.

20. Koch, *Der Kirschbaum*, p. 22; Koch, 'Da sah ich sie liegen: schön unsere Dörfer', in *Positionen 1: Wortmeldungen zur DDR-Literatur*, edited by Eberhard Günther (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1984), pp. 169-74 (p. 171).
21. See E.J. Passant, *A Short History of Germany 1815-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1959), pp. 79-80.
22. See Lehmann, 'Das erzählte Dorf', esp. pp. 102-04.
23. If the dry summer mentioned on p. 187 of *Die Totenkeule* is that of 1976, then the succession of seasons seems to locate Mitzig's death in the late autumn of 1978. The reference to 'der Krieg der Sterne', i.e. the Strategic Defense Initiative (p. 132), places the action of *Der Kirschbaum* in the early Eighties.
24. Marlene's judgement 'Du hättest auf solche wie Juschko bauen müssen, und nicht auf solche wie den Hein' (*DT*, p. 159) seems to me to indicate unused talents rather than being out of character as Elke Willkomm believes in her 'Laudatio auf Mathias Körners "Totenkeule"' (unpublished contribution to a Writers' Union discussion, dated December 1988), p. 3.
25. Klaus Hammer, 'Die Kirschbaumkrone im Waldteich: Gespräch mit Jurij Koch über seine neue Novelle',

- Sonntag*, 40 (1985) 2, p. 4.
26. See Anita M. Mallinckrodt, *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR: Literature, Church, Party and Interest Groups in Their Socio-Political Context* (Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of America, 1987), pp. 28-30.
27. Hammer, 'Die Kirschbaumkrone im Waldteich'.
28. Jürgen Hauschke, 'Jurij Koch: Der Kirschbaum: Märchen gegen Apparate?', *WB*, 33 (1987) 9, p. 1462.
29. Prometheus was adopted as a hero by communists from Marx onwards and has been reassessed by Volker Braun, Heiner Müller and Franz Fühmann among other GDR writers. See Rüdiger Bernhardt, *Odysseus' Tod - Prometheus' Leben: Antike Mythen in der Literatur der DDR* (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1983), pp. 71-117.
30. Speech by Hans Reichelt, *Sonntag*, 42 (1987) 49, p. 5.
31. Krumrey says on this point, 'Die Funktionsweise von Demokratie, das Verhältnis von oben und unten macht Körner zum Angelpunkt seiner literarischen Version von DDR-Geschichte. Nach dem Modell des klassischen Dramas sind die Dorfbewohner Prüf- und Entscheidungsfeld für den Protagonisten.' Krumrey, 'Aufbruch der "dürren Ziege"' (note 8), p. 139.
32. Hans-U. Rausch, 'Mathias Körner: Maßstab für Literatur war Hofschreiberei' (interview), *Börsen-*

- blatt für den deutschen Buchhandel* (1990) 15, pp. 277-79 (pp. 278-79).
33. Hinnerk Einhorn, 'Ein Wuttkower Wundertäter', *Wochenpost*, 29 September 1989. Irina Pfützenreuter, 'Sichten auf den Neubeginn: "Die Totenkeule" im Mitteldeutschen Verlag', *Berliner Zeitung*, 4/5 February 1989, p. 10.
 34. Irmtraud Gutschke, 'Rivalen, die doch zusammengehören', *ND*, 27 December 1984, p. 4.
 35. This primitive communist principle is a gentler version of Marx's injunction: 'Selbst eine ganze Gesellschaft, eine Nation, ja selbst alle gleichzeitigen Gesellschaften zusammengenommen, sind nicht Eigentümer der Erde. Sie sind nur ihre Besitzer, ihre Nutznießer, und haben sie als boni patres familias nachfolgenden Generationen verbessert zu hinterlassen.' Quoted by Koch in his speech at the 1987 Writers' Congress, *Sonntag*, 42 (1987) 49, p. 5.
 36. Beatrix Langner, 'Schule des Sehens,' *ndl*, 33 (1985) 5, p. 133. A similar distinction between 'das bildliche' or 'bildhafte Denken', which enables a person to feel him/herself as part of nature, and 'das abstrakte Denken', which has largely displaced the former view, is made in the witch's lecture 'Über atheistische Religio' in Irmtraud Morgner, *Amanda: Ein Hexenroman* (Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau, 1983), pp. 459-62.

37. Annemarie Auer, '"Respektloser Umgang" von Helga Königsdorf (Für und Wider)', *WB*, 33 (1987) 8, pp. 1338-41 (p. 1339).
38. Staszak, 'Erzählen globaler Probleme' (note 14), pp. 42-43.
39. Staszak, 'Erzählen globaler Probleme', p. 43.
40. Staszak, 'Erzählen globaler Probleme', p. 44.
41. See Staszak, 'Erzählen globaler Probleme', p. 44, for further examples.
42. Hammer, 'Die Kirschbaumkrone im Waldteich' (note 25).
43. Schuhmann specifically ascribes these functions to poetry rather than prose. See 'Lageberichte zur ökologischen Situation', p. 42 (the quotation given at p. 259 below).
44. Heinz Kahlau, 'Was ich gerade lese: Vor dem Gewissen', *Junge Welt*, 20 January 1989, p. 12.
45. Irmtraud Morgner said in 1984 in view of the state of the world, 'Man muß sich der Gefahr bewußt sein und sie gleichzeitig zeitweise verdrängen können, um nicht totgerüstet zu werden. Eine Überlebensstrategie gegen die Angst ist nötig. Um aktiv zu bleiben, sich wehren zu können, um nicht gelähmt zu werden.' Eva Kaufmann, 'Interview mit Irmtraud Morgner', *WB*, 30 (1984) 9, pp. 1494-1532 (p. 1498). Morgner regards myth as a source of encouragement

for the survival strategy, but Königsdorf, disagreeing, considers informed fear itself to be productive: 'Aber Hunger und soziale Not sind konkret erfahrbar. Die Bedrohung der menschlichen Zivilisation bleibt abstrakt. Man kann die Gedanken darüber beiseiteschieben wie das Wissen um die eigene Sterblichkeit. Man kann das Wissen sogar denunzieren. Dem Patienten die Wahrheit vorenthalten. Vielleicht in der besten Absicht. Angst aus Wissen lähme nur, kann man sagen. Aber man darf dann auch nicht mit der Mobilisierung seiner Kräfte rechnen.' (RU, p. 94)

46. The narrator has a moral lesson for her son, but does not deny his right to become a physicist or the legitimacy of the profession: 'Keinesfalls werde ich ihm sagen: Seit Hiroshima und Nagasaki verbietet sich Physik. Das wäre nichts als dumme Maschinenstürmerei.' (p. 92). These thoughts stand in sharp contrast to the horror shown by the physicist Möbius in Dürrenmatt's play *Die Physiker* when his son tells him that he wants to become a physicist too: 'Das darfst du nicht, Jörg-Lukas. Das schlage dir aus dem Kopf. Ich - ich verbiete es dir.' Friedrich Dürrenmatt, *Die Physiker: Eine Komödie in zwei Akten* (Zürich: Verlag der Arche, 1962), p. 32. Königsdorf, moreover, airs possible solutions to the scientist's dilemma, whereas Dürrenmatt gives his

readers and audience no help in resolving it.

47. Königsdorf, 'Das Prinzip Menschenwürde: Thesen für einen Vortrag', *ndl*, 37 (1989) 11, pp. 5-10 (pp. 5-6, 7).
48. See Staszak, 'Erzählen globaler Probleme' (note 14), pp. 48-51, for a comparison of the attitudes to science in both texts.
49. Staszak, 'Erzählen globaler Probleme', p. 52. The East German literary scholar Staszak, writing in 1988, believes that Marxist philosophy is the only avenue to a new relationship of rationality and morality.
50. Hammer, 'Die Kirschbaumkrone im Waldteich' (note 25). Compare Koch, 'Da sah ...' (note 20), pp. 173-74.
51. Hauschke, 'Jurij Koch: Der Kirschbaum: Märchen gegen Apparate' (note 27), p. 1464. Koch sees 'der noch nicht entschiedene Kampf zwischen Märchen und Apparaten und die berechtigte Hoffnung, daß die Märchen siegen' as part of the varied, contradictory 'soul of the village' in 'Da sah...', p. 172.
52. The description of how the young Ena climbed onto the barn roof to see the world: 'Da lagen sie schön, unsere Dörfer' (*DK*, p. 47), echoes a passage in the writings of Hanzo Nepila: 'Will sagen, daß einige Fichten waren so hoch wie der Turm zu Schleife...

Die größte erstieg ich, und unter mir da sah ich sie liegen schön, unsere Dörfer.' Quoted in Koch, 'Da sah ...', p. 169.

53. Klaus Hammer, 'Fiktiver Dialog: Helga Königsdorf und ihr neues Buch', *Sonntag*, 41 (1986) 34, p. 4.
54. Bernd Leistner, '"Respektloser Umgang" von Helga Königsdorf (Für und Wider)', *WB*, 33 (1987) 8, pp. 1345-48 (p. 1346).
55. For example: 'Hat unser übergroßer unbeschäftigter Gehirnteil sich in eine manisch-destruktiver Hyperaktivität geflüchtet und, schneller und schneller, schließlich - heute - in rasender Geschwindigkeit immer neue Phantasien herausgeschleudert, die wir, unfähig, uns zu bremsen, in Wunschziele umgewandelt und unserer Maschinenwelt als Produktionsaufgaben übertragen haben?' Christa Wolf, *Störfall: Nachrichten eines Tages* (Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau, 1987), p. 80.
56. 'UM WELT: Zu diesem Heft', *ndl*, 37 (1989) 11, pp. 5-7 (p. 6).
57. Steffen Peltsch, 'Umwelt in unserer Literatur,' *mitteilungen* (of the Schriftstellerverband der DDR), 1989, no. 5, pp. 4-12 (p. 10).
58. Dietmar Felden, 'Anrührende Liebesgeschichte', *National-Zeitung*, 28 May 1985, p.7. Irmtraud Gutschke, 'Rivalen, die doch zusammengehören: Zu Jurij Kochs Novelle "Der Kirschbaum" aus dem

Mitteldeutschen Verlag,' *ND*, 27 December 1984, p. 4. Jürgen Hauschke, 'Jurij Koch: Der Kirschbaum: Märchen gegen Apparate', *WB*, 33 (1987) 9, pp. 1460-64. Günter Höhne, 'Legende vom Weißtdunoch', *Die Weltbühne*, 80 (1985) 20, pp. 618-20. Marianne Krumrey, 'Im Zwiespalt von Lebensweisen: "Der Kirschbaum" - eine Geschichte von Jurij Koch', *Berliner Zeitung*, 30 May 1985, p. 7. Beatrix Langner, 'Schule des Sehens,' *ndl*, 33 (1985) 5, pp. 132-4. Page references to secondary literature will be given in the text when necessary.

59. Compare the later, remarkably similar comment by Jürgen Hauschke to which note 28 refers!
60. Annemarie Auer, Werner Jehser, Bernd Leistner, Gunnar Müller-Waldeck, Joseph Pischel, Irene Knoll, '"Respektloser Umgang" von Helga Königsdorf (Für und Wider)', *WB*, 33 (1987) 8, pp. 1338-57. Christel Berger, 'Helga Königsdorfs "Respektloser Umgang" bei Aufbau', *Berliner Zeitung*, 21-22 March 1987, p. 7. Irmtraud Gutschke, 'Ein Dialog in Prosa über die Kraft des Lebens: Helga Königsdorfs Erzählung "Respektloser Umgang"', *ND*, 22 April 1987, p. 4. Klaus Hammer, 'Mobilisierung der Humanität', *ndl*, 35 (1987) 8, pp. 138-42. Heinz Kahlau, 'Vor dem Gewissen', *Junge Welt*, 20 January 1989, p.12. Eva Kaufmann, 'Haltung annehmen: Zu Helga Königsdorfs

Erzählung "Respektloser Umgang", in *DDR-Literatur '86 im Gespräch*, edited by Siegfried Rönisch (Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau, 1987), pp. 278-87. Irene Knoll, 'Dem Gewissen verpflichtet', *Junge Welt*, 28 October 1986, p. 8. Rulo Melchert, 'Erzählung von Helga Königsdorf: Aufbau-Verlag: Respektloser Umgang', *Sonntag*, 42 (1987) 51, p. 4. Marie-Ange Roy, 'Helga KÖNIGSDORF: *Respektloser Umgang*, Aufbau-Verlag, Berlin und Weimar, 1986, 116p', *Connaissance de la RDA*, no. 24, pp. 119-21. Heinz-Jürgen Staszak, 'Erzählen globaler Probleme,' in *DDR-Literatur '87 im Gespräch*, edited by Siegfried Rönisch (Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau, 1988), pp. 26-57.

61. 'Aktiv Literaturkritik: Streitbare Diskussion zu einem Debüt', *mitteilungen* (of the Schriftstellerverband der DDR), 1989, no. 5, pp. 3-4.
62. Christiane Baumann, 'Ein Stück Atlantis', *ich schreibe*, (1989) 3, pp. 85-87. Sybille Eberlein, 'Weil Uta sie ganz will, fliehen die Männer: Zu drei Debüts, erschienen im Mitteldeutschen Verlag', *Tribüne*, 13 January 1989. Hinnerk Einhorn, *Wochenpost*, 29 September 1989. Uwe Kant, 'Ausgelesenes', *Das Magazin* (1989) 2, p. 80. Angelika Keune, 'Auf Heiner Mitzigs Spuren', *BZ am Abend*, 10 February 1989. Tilo Köhler, 'Die einfachen Wahrheiten', *Temperamente*, 13 (1988) 4, pp. 148-51. Marianne Krumrey, 'Aufbruch der "dürren

- Ziege"', *ndl*, 37 (1989) 6, pp. 137-40. Roland Müller, 'Revolutionär und Mittelmaß', *Schweriner Volkszeitung*, 13 January 1989. Steffen Peltsch, 'Konterfei eines Dorfes in dunkel-erdigen Farben,' *ND*, 11-12 February 1989, p. 14. Irina Pfützenreuter, 'Sichten auf den Neubeginn: "Die Totenkeule" im Mitteldeutschen Verlag', *Berliner Zeitung*, 4/5 February 1989, p. 10. Michael Sollorz, 'Wie weiter in Wuttkow', *Junge Welt*, 14 February 1989, p. 10. Elke Willkomm, 'Laudatio auf Matthias Körners "Totenkeule"' (unpublished contribution to a Writers' Union discussion, dated December 1988). Author unknown, 'Literatouristik', *Eulenspiegel*, 12 May 1989.
63. Peltsch, 'Umwelt in unserer Literatur', *mitteilungen* (of the Schriftstellerverband der DDR), 1989, no. 5, p. 11.
64. See Peltsch, 'Umwelt in unserer Literatur', *mitteilungen*, 1989, no. 5, p. 10, for his comments on *Der Kirschbaum*.
65. Reference given in note 62 above.
66. Hinnerk Einhorn, 'Der Bauer zählt die Küken am Abend', *Sonntag*, 44 (1989) 46 (12 November), p. 7.
67. Hans-U. Rausch, 'Matthias Körner: Maßstab für Literatur war Hofschreiberei' (interview), *Börsenblatt für den deutschen Buchhandel* (1990) 15,

pp. 277-79 (p. 278).

68. Hans-U. Rausch, 'Matthias Körner: Maßstab für Literatur war Hofschreiberei' (interview), *Börsenblatt für den deutschen Buchhandel* (1990) 15, p. 278. See also Axel Geiß, 'Ulrich Plenzdorf: An der Weltesche zu sägen ...', *Filmspiegel* (1990) 6, pp. 6-7.
69. Mallinckrodt, *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR*, p. 85.
70. Mallinckrodt, *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR*, p. 86. Krumrey writes, 'Bei mir hat er [Körner] Nachdenken darüber hinterlassen, wie hoch der Preis unseres Fortschritts ist und die Gewißheit, daß in Zukunft entschieden weniger Verluste eintreten dürfen.' Krumrey, 'Aufbruch der "dürren Ziege"', *ndI*, 37 (1989) 6, p. 140.
71. Hubertus Knabe, 'Zweifel an der Industriegesellschaft: Ökologische Kritik in der erzählenden DDR-Literatur', in *Umweltprobleme und Umweltbewußtsein in der DDR*, edited by Redaktion Deutschland Archiv (Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1985), pp. 201-250 (p. 240).

Chapter 4 - Poetry

1. Introduction

In the study quoted at the beginning of the previous chapter, Schuhmann concludes that poets have written about ecological problems in a different way from the 'Ursachenforschung' undertaken by narrative writers:

Die Lyriker dagegen setzen Zeichen, die den Leser auffordern, in sich zu gehen. Das heißt: aufmerksamer und sorgsamer zu bewahren und zu schützen, was menschliches Leben erfordert, weit-sichtiger als bisher abzuwägen, was als Fortschritt in den persönlichen und gesellschaftlichen Bilanzen verbucht wird, und umsichtiger und behutsamer mit der Natur dort umzugehen, wo der Mensch durch sie hindurchgehen muß. Damit kündigt sich eine Art Tendenzwende im dichterischen Umgang mit der Natur an, die weniger in ihrer Schönheit [...] als in ihrer Versehrtheit wahrgenommen werden muß [...]¹

It can be seen from Schuhmann's findings that environmental lyric poetry tends to use signs (one may take this to include images, metaphors, scenes, events)

which point to an aspect of reality greater than themselves, whereas narrative prose often adopts a more comprehensive, investigative approach. It is also clear from the passage that these signs and these poems appeal to the reader on the subjective level (even if they are largely objective in their description of things - see below). Beyond this, though, Schuhmann's article is open to disagreement on several points.

In his conclusion, Schuhmann states that the majority of GDR ecological poems are distinguished by 'ihre nüchtern-kritische Diktion [...], die schonungslos beschreibt, was vorgefunden, entdeckt oder beobachtet wurde.'² Earlier, a more specific differentiation is made between on the one hand Volker Braun's long poems 'Die Mummelfälle' and 'Burghammer', with their subjective outbursts of feeling and thought and their many layers of thought and language, and on the other the relatively factual, short and uncomplicated texts of Wulf Kirsten, Richard Pietraß and Heinz Czechowski.³ Both the former and the latter statements are undoubtedly true for 'Diät', the poem by Czechowski that Schuhmann chooses for consideration, but the critic does not recognise the satirical trend in environmental poetry of which this poem forms part. Schuhmann also fails to mention that the elements of nightmarish exaggeration and fantasy in Kirsten's 'dorf' and Pietraß's 'Die Schattenalge'

contrast with the general matter-of-fact approach that he discerns.⁴ Indeed, Schuhmann's emphasis on the factuality and sobriety of most ecological verse underestimates its imaginative nature. It is also questionable whether poets, as opposed to narrative writers, really do dispense totally with 'research into the causes' through the representation of a 'surrounding field',⁵ since the above-mentioned poems by Braun place the central, factual happenings in the context of other elements precisely in order to shed light on hidden connections, and, as we shall see below, some of the shorter poems of Czechowski and Kirsten also undertake a kind of investigation in their depiction of a social context.

In a similar way to the previous two chapters, the basic purpose of this chapter is to investigate how environmental issues are treated in the poetry of the GDR. Schuhmann's study raises pertinent questions here: how objective or subjective, factual or imaginative (etc.) are the poems in their handling of the material? to what extent do poets undertake 'Ursachenforschung'? Here I will also pursue further the question raised in chapter 3: does a new way of being in the world necessitate a new way of writing? I have decided against choosing Braun's environmental poems as an example of novel forms in this connection because the bounds of the chapter would have to be widely extended to include the

themes of industry and *Zivilisation* as well as nature and the countryside, and because these poems have already been adequately dealt with elsewhere.⁶ Rather, I have chosen to concentrate on the new forms of *Pietraß* (discussed at the end of this introduction as well as in individual sections below) as another response to the situation of the individual in a multiply endangered world. While the other main writers studied in this chapter, Heinz Czechowski and Wulf Kirsten, commonly employ free verse, the poems 'verlandendes torfloch' by Kirsten and 'Dorfbegräbnis' by Kito Lorenc provide examples of more conventional poetic forms. A further point for consideration is the need to reassess old literary topoi (we saw this undertaken in *Die Totenkeule*). This need has been particularly strong in environmental poetry, where the traditional poetic models of 'beautiful' nature have had to be abandoned or revised in view of the reality of 'injured' or 'damaged' nature, as Schuhmann calls it above. Finally, it is necessary to be aware that images of ruined landscapes may have a social meaning, for the landscape is a standing metaphor for society in GDR poetry (e.g. in Georg Maurer's post-war poem 'Veränderte Landschaft').⁷

These questions will be examined in an analysis of representative East German environmental poems published over the period 1977-87. It is desirable to consider some

earlier texts than in the previous two chapters because the main period of environmental criticism in verse embraces the middle to late 1970s as well as the 1980s. As indicated above, the main poets to be considered are Wulf Kirsten, Heinz Czechowski and Richard Pietraß. Following a survey of the structure of the whole chapter, the second half of this introduction will examine these poets more closely: the development of environmental themes in their work, their representative status and relevant formal aspects.

The main body of the chapter will compare poems, arranged in thematic groups, published by Czechowski, Kirsten and Pietraß in the period concerned. This rather narrow range will be augmented by the works of other GDR poets to illuminate certain aspects of the field better, and by related prose texts to enable comparison between genres. The basic plan of the chapter is intended to show a spectrum of topics reaching from specific local examples of ecological and social damage to the question of global survival. Sections 2-4 form a group concerned with the changing face of nature and the landscape. Their titles, the primary literature analysed and the main topics explored are:

2. 'Ponds and pools': Czechowski, 'Erfahrungen mit Karpfen' (1974), 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet' (1981) and 'Industrieviertel P.' (1989); Kirsten,

'verlandendes torfloch' (1986, written 1981); the pond episode in Körner's novel *Die Totenkeule* (1988).⁸ Using the example of the pond motif, this section discusses different literary approaches (including a prose approach) to the destruction of natural sites and shows how traditional topoi of nature poetry, such as the beauty of nature and man's harmonious relationship with nature, have been reassessed by environmental poets.

3. 'Non-functional nature': Kirsten, 'ödland' (1986, written 1981); Günter Kunert, 'Natur II' (1977); Pietraß, 'Durch die Blume' (1987).⁹ Here the social landscape metaphor, also present in the preceding section, comes to the fore: in this case nature existing for its own sake stands for individual autonomy, as well as having ecological and aesthetic value.

Section 4, 'Dying villages', considers some works with direct social relevance, concerned as they are with rural communities damaged by societal and economic changes. Here again conventional topoi, such as the balance of man-made and natural things in the poem, are reassessed by poets. The poems studied are:

Czechowski, 'Im Seekreis' (1981); Kirsten, 'dorf'

(1977, written 1974); Kito Lorenc, 'Dorfbegräbnis' (1984, written 1979); Pietraß, 'Eiche' (1987).¹⁰

Section 5, 'Man and other species', looks at poems which address the *global* ecological and nuclear threats. Possible future disaster is in this case exemplified by dangerous competition between humans and other species. This section includes a comparison between the poetic and essayistic approaches. The texts analysed are:

Czechowski, 'Die Vögel' (1981) and 'Wir' (1987); Pietraß, 'Die Überlebende' (1987, written 1982) and part of the essay 'Vom Vergehen der Arten' (1987, written 1982).¹¹

The sixth section examines the changing critical reception in the GDR of 'environmental' works by Czechowski, Kirsten and Pietraß. The seventh, concluding section undertakes an evaluation of the poetic approach, paying attention also to the role of poetry in the public debate.

Wulf Kirsten belongs to the generation of poets born in the mid-Thirties, whose work is characterised by social commitment. Although he has lived in the cities of Leipzig and Weimar since 1957, his work has always been dominated by rural themes deriving ultimately from

his village upbringing in the Meißen-Dresden area. What Kirsten states in the programmatic afterword to his first poetry volume *satzanfang* (1970) is still essentially true for the poems discussed in this chapter: 'die Begrenzung der Welt auf ein Segment' (a method also professed by Jurij Koch) allows one to achieve a many-layered picture of nature which embraces local social and historical references while also being open to the broader world and the present age.¹² In the *satzanfang* poems the contemporary enthusiasm for social and technical progress partially overlaid Kirsten's close attachment to his home region (see section 4 below), but in *der bleibaum* (1977) the poet critically reassesses its impact on country and town. The disappearance of old landscapes and ways of life is now a matter for regret and even protest ('dorf'). In the second half of the Seventies and the early Eighties (*die erde bei Meißen*, 1986) this admonitory look backwards acquires elements of darkness and bitterness ('verlandendes torfloch'), but nature still retains its vitality in places ('ödland'). Since that volume, Kirsten has continued to publish poems mourning or criticising the ruination of landscapes and villages, but the only development here has been a further spread of pessimism both before and after the *Wende* of 1989.¹³ This probably reflects disappointment both with GDR society and with the outcome of the *Wende*.

Wulf Kirsten may be taken as representative of those East German regional poets who have shown significant environmental commitment in their work. He shares Axel Schulze's regretful description of transformed landscapes, decayed villages and a vanished way of life, Kito Lorenc's more lyrical lament for the same (which we shall see in 'Dorfbegräbnis') and the sense of attachment to a locality manifested by these poets and Walter Werner. I have chosen to concentrate on Kirsten because there is greater depth in his works than in those of Schulze and because Kirsten has written more environmental poems than Werner or Lorenc, which allows a reasonable selection to be made.

An important reason for the depth of Kirsten's poems lies in their composition. In *satzanfang*, Kirsten announced his adherence to an 'aufgerauhte, "körnige" Sprache', intended to poeticise but not romanticise the working life of an area. The poems were said to be based on words which express experiences¹⁴ (and which may equally well be taken from modern technical language as from the old farming vocabulary or from literary tradition). The poems studied here still follow this compositional principle, although they are written with greater flexibility than the earlier ones and may indeed exhibit a new kind of lyrical beauty (see Section 2 below). The outward form of the poems varies from case to case. In the period under consideration the lyric

subject retreats into the background while the things and actions seen are placed firmly in the foreground, but - noticeably in the environmental poems - there is strong personal feeling in Kirsten's descriptions.

Heinz Czechowski belongs to the same generation as Kirsten, and his work is similar in some respects. Like Kirsten, Czechowski has written many poems on the landscapes around his native Dresden and elsewhere in the southern GDR, but Czechowski's poems have always been reflective and also broader in intellectual scope than Kirsten's tightly-focussed verse. In *Wasserfahrt* (1968), Czechowski already weighs the ugly, industrially tainted reality of town and country against future hopes. In *Schafe und Sterne* (1974) he is more sober about the future, already tending to see history as repetitive rather than progressive (a view implicit in 'Erfahrungen mit Karpfen'). *Was mich betrifft* (1981) not only remarks, as before, on the decay of the man-made environment (the village in 'Im Seekreis'), but also lays a specific, critical stress on the destruction of nature ('Landschaftsschutzgebiet'). The latter poem also displays the gloomy assessment of GDR society and the state of the world which is frequent in Czechowski's poetry of the 1980s, as are thoughts of future disaster (the contemporaneous poem 'Die Vögel'). Like

'Landschaftsschutzgebiet' and 'Die Vögel', some poems in *Kein näheres Zeichen* (1987) still seem to have the 'enlightening' function of warning ('Wir') or of dispelling illusions, which accords with the author's belief at that time that poems which do not evade the existential problems can have a hidden, long-term effect on the reader.¹⁵ In *Mein Venedig* (1989) the process of disillusionment has gone so far that the wretched state of nature and GDR society is accepted with resignation ('Industrieviertel P.').

The gloominess expressed by Czechowski, with its GDR-specific and global causes, is common in East German poetry of the later 1970s and the 1980s: we see it in the works of Kirsten, Braun and - in an intense form - Kunert. I am concentrating on Czechowski rather than Kunert firstly because Czechowski, unlike Kunert, remained in the GDR writing about that country for the whole of the period under consideration, and secondly because Kunert has already attracted an extensive secondary literature on environmental and related topics.¹⁶

Since the 1968 volume, Czechowski has favoured a free form of verse which allows ideas to flow unimpeded in essentially everyday language. The poems have always been written from subjective experience and the subjective viewpoint, once emphatically expressed in the first person singular, but in the volumes of the Eighties

the lyric figure is caught in the clash of different phenomena:

'Wissend und ratlos sein, gewiß des alles tragenden Kontinuums menschlicher Geschichte und doch haltlos unter dem Druck so vieler sich gegenseitig aufhebender Wahrnehmungen in der alltäglichen Existenz [...]'¹⁷ (Christel and Walfried Hartinger)

The poet thus exposes illusions and makes us aware of reality, sometimes in a pointed or satirical way.

Richard Pietraß, born in 1946, belongs to a generation between that of Czechowski, Kirsten and Braun with their basic social commitment and that of, say, Steffen Mensching and Uwe Kolbe with their relative inwardness. Pietraß's poems in *Notausgang* (1980) are, like those of Mensching and Kolbe, largely concerned with personal life and feelings in urban surroundings.¹⁸ However, since writing the poem 'Der Ringende' in 1979 (about a tree under assault from road-building),¹⁹ Pietraß has added a new dimension to his humanism by expressing environmental concern in verse, in the essay 'Vom Vergehen der Arten' and in the editorship of an anthology of environmental poetry. Several poems in *Freiheitsmuseum* (1982) warn of inhuman biological

techniques or depict local examples of damage to nature. *Spielball* (1987) emphasises the global character of such problems, with the title referring to the earth itself in our hands. The themes include nuclear war ('Die Überlebende'), hunger, the powerlessness of the individual, cruelty to animals, the conflict between man and nature in its different forms (global competition in 'Die Überlebende', a local instance of ecological destruction in 'Durch die Blume'). These topics are pursued further, with thoughtfulness rather than the inherent passion of *Spielball*, in the newer poems of the *Weltkind* collection (1990); the village poem 'Eiche' is contemporaneous with these. In his poems, Pietraß often arouses compassion for suffering animals, plants and humans, for, he says, 'Im Zeitalter des Massenmords berührt nur noch das Einzelschicksal. Wer das weiß, dem ist letzteres nicht gering.' This does not only refer to human life. 'Für sie [die Literatur] kann es wohlstandsmenschliche Sachzwänge nicht geben, nur die Verteidigung des Existenzrechts alles Lebendigen.'²⁰

Of the younger poets, only Pietraß's contemporary Thomas Rosenlöcher pays as much attention as he does to environmental themes. Rosenlöcher's use of traditional poetic forms is interesting, but his poetry is rather monotonous. Pietraß, with his similar humanitarian concerns and gentle attachment to nature, can take Rosenlöcher's place here.

Without reshaping language as radically as the younger poet Bert Papenfuß or even Volker Braun, Pietraß uses word-play to serious effect, together with apparently simple or silly rhyme, metre, alliteration and juxtapositions of meaning (naturally to different degrees in different poems). The unusual stylistic features and novel forms distance the reader from the writer's subjectivity and other conventional features of lyric poetry, but Pietraß is not merely an avant-gardist. Anna Chiarloni points out that he is one of several European poets whose word-play is a reaction to 'eine terminologisch vorgetäuschte Wirklichkeit'. Pietraß seeks to reestablish communication with the reader in this way, and pleads for the free expression of the individual.²¹ One might add that the poet's playful treatment of words, concepts and forms avoids the frequent earnestness of discourse about global problems and reawakens the reader's dulled conscience to the truth.

2. Ponds and pools

Harald Hartung said rhetorically of water motifs in 1977,

Was erklärt die Beliebtheit der See- und Fluß-thematik in der DDR-Lyrik? Dies, daß Fließendes und Stagnierendes seine eigene Dialektik hat, daß diese Naturbilder sich besonders gut als Bilder von Geschichte und Gesellschaft lesen lassen?²²

It is not surprising that these motifs which bring together nature, society and history should over time develop an environmentally critical significance. If we look at Heinz Czechowski's river poems, for example, we already see worries in 'Wasserfahrt' (1968) that the dynamic force of change might also lessen the enjoyment of life and nature. 'Flußfahrt' (1974) calls for the truth to be told about history and pollution; 'Diät' (1981) pointedly criticises the pollution of the Elbe; while in 'Auf den Plätzen am Fluß' (1987) the river of history has finally become a sluggish, contaminated flow towards oblivion.²³ The motifs of the pond (as shown below) and the lake have undergone a similar development.

In contrast to Karl Mickel's 'Der See' (first published 1966), in which man heroically assimilates

nature by the dynamic action of drinking a lake,²⁴ the poems about intact standing waters express personal sensibilities and are not so explicitly devoted to historical and social concerns as the river poems. In Sarah Kirsch's 'Schöner See Wasseraug' (1967)²⁵ and in Czechowski's more politically orientated 'Vers ohne Lösung' (1962),²⁶ lakes and ponds offer private seclusion amid natural beauty and the opportunity for imagination or 'reflection' in both senses of the word. Both Kirsch and Czechowski present a picture of the human being and nature in harmony. If we go back further, we see the same elements in 'Der Knabenteich' by Peter Huchel (first published 1932).²⁷ In this exemplary use of the pond motif, the harmony of man and nature is a childhood memory which comes alive again when the adult speaker revisits an old haunt. The scene becomes animate and enchanted, and there is a direct reciprocity between the human being and nature when the boy/man sees his reflection as a 'Nick' or water spirit. On this exceptional occasion the primal integrity of human life is for a moment restored.

The first poem considered in this section, Heinz Czechowski's 'Erfahrungen mit Karpfen' (1974), agrees with 'Der Knabenteich' in its joyous revival of childhood memories and of the harmonious man-nature relationship handed down from the past. 'Landschaft'schutzgebiet' by

the same author (1981) and Wulf Kirsten's 'verlandendes torfloch' (written 1981), use divergent poetic means to criticise the breakdown of that (presumed) relationship. But they share the same core content as other environmentally critical pond poems:²⁸ that the natural beauty, wholeness and vitality of the pond have been broken by human actions. Czechowski's 'Industrieviertel P.' (1989) shows a development beyond environmental poetry. Finally, the pond episode from Matthias Körner's novel *Die Totenkeule* (1988) is included as a comparable piece of prose fiction to 'Landschaft'schutzgebiet'. This text places the destruction of a pond in its ecological and socio-economic context.

A stagnant, rat-infested pool already appears in Czechowski's poem 'Peripherie' (1967),²⁹ but this reflection of the inadequacy of the present does not invalidate the future hopes which predominate in *Wasserfahrt*. In contrast, 'Erfahrungen mit Karpfen' (1974) shifts from this moderate advocacy of progress. The long, ode-like poem celebrates the continuity of an everyday tradition, the catching and cooking of a fish, through centuries of history. It opens with a reassuring childhood reminiscence of fish meals with Mother and Father (by implication in the Nazi period), and then a connection is made with earlier history in the second section, which describes a visit to fishponds established

by Augustus the Strong (Elector of Saxony 1694-1733). In the third section the community of experience is further broadened through the lyric subject's 'dreams' of conversations with fishermen of different lands and ages. These past experiences, which embody an intimate relationship between man and nature (in a domesticated form), are in the next three sections revived when the speaker kills and cooks a carp in the traditional way. When the opening stanza is repeated at the end, it seems as if the younger generation are acting exactly as their parents did, in spite of the unstated difference in social conditions.

The overall framework is one of historical continuity, but the second and third sections still express sadness at the gradual disappearance of the past, e.g. in the description of the visit to the fish-ponds (whether recent or in childhood):

Eingehegt von moosbewachsenen Trockenmauern
Lagen die Teiche: Augen voll dunkler
Melancholie: Schloßteich, Augustusteich,
Fraunteich,
Angelegt von August dem Starken.

Durchs Schilf im Dezember
Gingen wir trockenen Fußes auf knackendem Eis

Übern Morast ins abgefischte Gelände.

In offenen Tümpeln überwinterten träge die Karpfen.

This affecting scene of slow decay is enhanced by ponderous words and metre. Although not enchanted, the ponds are humanised as 'eyes', with 'dark melancholy' referring both to their imputed feelings over their neglected state and to their appearance like 'black bile'. What is more, 'abgefischt' is in the next two stanzas followed by further verbs signifying disappearance: 'Fleisch, das auf der Zunge zergeht'; the named species of fish which are either 'Nicht zu vergessen' or 'vergessen'; the speaker's dream of himself 'vertieft ins Gespräch über verfallende Schützen,/ Verschwundene Mauern, verlandende Teiche'.

However, the poet is still able to reinforce what is endangered by naming the connections between past and present, man and nature. Old lore is revived when the names of fish are listed and the correct way of killing and cooking a carp is detailed. The ancient respect of the fisherman for his prey is reaffirmed when the speaker performs the 'uralten Ritus, der Mordtat' on the fish he has caught, accompanying this with the utterance of a ritual formula.³⁰ The rather elevated diction, dactylic metre and approximately even length of lines and stanzas in this ode help to give it a roundedness of form and content, as in the lines: 'Butter und Meerrettich, Sahne,

geriebener Apfel/ Runden die Bissen. Die Zunge feiert ein Fest.' The meal served up by the speaker to his family, or maybe guests, amounts to a materialistic communion between humans and nature and a celebration of intact human life. In this poem the balance or harmony of man and nature, present and past still survives.

In 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet' (1981) these ancient equilibria are completely upset. This poem reports the destruction that the author found on a later visit to the now modernised fish-farm, stated to be at Malschwitz (near Bautzen). The ironic contrast between the title of the poem and the ruined landscape described in the text testifies to the poem's satirical nature. The first line, which forms part of a satirical scene of construction workers with their threatening 'Bagger und Bulldozer', runs: 'Drei Helden der sozialistischen Umgestaltung der Landschaft standen am Eingang.' Two official clichés from the times of Stalin and Ulbricht, 'Held der sozialistischen Arbeit' and 'die sozialistische Umgestaltung der Landwirtschaft', are conflated into a deliberately pompous appellation which emphasises the fact that the heroic attitude of these workers towards the transformation of nature is outdated and certainly inappropriate for this sensitive environment. Where the earlier poem progresses harmoniously from one time to

another, here the initial satire on the construction workers is followed abruptly by a picture of devastation. The text, whose order I follow approximately, moves on with further jumps of content to the global and epochal context of this damage, the loss of valuable traditions and finally to a scene from the new social reality.

The scene which greets the visitors is one of arbitrary destruction, with paths churned up and a decayed stork's nest on the gable of the state farm building (an ill omen which here also hints where the blame lies):

Wir wateten weiter, dorthin,
Wo nach unserem Ermessen die Teiche
Durch Binsen hier und Weiden
Zu glänzen begannen. Zersplitterte Bäume
Ragten gespenstisch, wo einst begehbbare Wege
Das Wasser zerteilten. Die Teiche,
Augen voll dunkler Melancholie,
Waren erloschen.

The violent change to the landscape here contrasts sharply with the quiet decay in the earlier poem. The frequent 'ver-' prefix of 'Erfahrungen mit Karpfen' is replaced by 'zer-', signifying sudden splitting rather than gradual deterioration, and the less regular metre and ragged overall appearance of the later poem helps to

convey disorder, not the sense of an ordered whole. The discrepancies between lines and sense-units express fragmentation of life as well as of immediate experience. The quotation of the eye image from 'Erfahrungen mit Karpfen' makes the draining of the ponds into a brutal act of blinding. Indeed, a living, if dormant, landscape has been replaced by a landscape of death. The quotations from Lenau's 'Schilflieder'³¹ convey the sadness of the loss: in the original the reflection of the evening star shining 'durch Binsen hier und Weiden', providing hope for a speaker who has been rejected by his beloved, is soon 'erloschen' by rain, and in 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet' the gleam of the ponds, which raises the speaker's expectations of unspoilt beauty, proves deceptive and his hopes are likewise 'extinguished'. Unlike in Lenau's poem, though, the extinction is final. The technique of following apparent natural beauty with contrasting ugliness is a common one in environmental poetry.³² The frequent use of quotations or motifs from older nature poetry not only underlines the poignancy of the actual loss of natural beauty, but also shows that the poetic tradition of 'beautiful nature' as a source of inner encouragement has now become an illusion.³³

The poet now points to the global process behind the local manifestation and apportions blame:

Kein Platz mehr für Storch, Frosch, Natter und
Otter.

Weil der Mensch die Meere leer gefischt hat,
Versucht er, das Loch, das er schuf, zu verstopfen:
Der Baggerzahn unserer Zeit zerreißt
Die ach so verletzliche Haut des Planeten.

Ungeduldig

Trommeln die Planer und Leiter: Weg
Mit der Teichwirtschaft ihrer Väter, her
Mit der Großteichanlage! Die Wahrheit der Alten
Geht nicht einmal in die Binsen.
Und aus den Märchen geflüchtet
Liegen der Wassermann und die Nixen
Unter den Trümmern uralter Brücken:
[...]

Rather than supporting his polemical argument with facts about the overfishing of the seas and the consequent expansion of pond fisheries³⁴ (in the manner of Heathcote Williams's book-length poem *Whale Nation*),³⁵ Czechowski asserts it in emotive terms. Schuhmann states that Czechowski's ecological poems are often restricted to facts and what is observed, but the section of 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet' above displays 'subjektive Gefühls- und Gedankenausbrüche', attributed by Schuhmann to Braun, rather than the mere 'innere Anteilnahme des Autors' ascribed to Czechowski.³⁶ The latter poet's

subjective outbursts are, though, assertions about the world rather than expressions of the writer's personal situation, as in Braun's work. The comic element in Czechowski's attacks alleviates the pathos and enhances the message through a degree of detachment: the substitution of a new source of fish for the exhausted one is shown to be absurd as well as harmful by figuring the policy as the filling-in of one hole by digging another. The poet further attaches blame for the destruction on modern man in general and the 'planners and managers' (another set phrase from Ulbricht's time) in particular. He shows the extent of the losses, not only of landscape and wildlife but also of traditions, like those recorded in 'Erfahrungen mit Karpfen', deriving from times when humans were closer to nature: the old fish-breeding technology and the craftsmanship preserved in the stonework of the bridges (replaced by 'Eisenbeton, böse erstarrt'). With the ending of their world, what was true for past generations no longer even counts as a truism ('Binsenwahrheit') and hence perishes ('geht in die Binsen'). The fate of the *Wassermann* and the *Nixen* likewise indicates that the culture and beliefs of the past have been left to die. On the personal level, this destruction of the pond's magic represents an alienation from the childhood which was still vital in 'Erfahrungen mit Karpfen'. There is an element of

nostalgia for a better past in this poem, but the past can clearly no longer be revived.

In the final scene of 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet' the pretensions of GDR society satirised at the beginning and the traditional harmony presented in 'Erfahrungen mit Karpfen' are dispelled for good as illusions and the truth is revealed: that (echoing the riven landscape above) ordinary people of today are just as alienated from one another as they are from nature and tradition. In a shabby, cruel transaction, the carp is not caught in the time-honoured way but bought from a shopkeeper, who wraps it up alive in an old cement-bag. Grown squeamish about killing, the speaker and his companion let the fish die slowly, and suffer 'ohne zu wissen warum,/ Ein schlechtes Gewissen', which contrasts sharply with the sensual pleasure gained from the dead fish before. The lyric subject has lost his former self-assurance, and the sociability and family cohesion of 'Erfahrungen mit Karpfen' have given way to the 'drivers'' casual mockery of the two visitors for lack of manliness and the lack of comprehension between the visitors and an old Sorb. Together with the scenes of the devastated landscape and the triumphant workers above, the final scene forms a picture of a population which has grown callous or at best alienated, and which because of this is committing cruel and destructive acts. These scenes are not just signs which hint at the responsibility of people like the

writer and the reader, but in a highly succinct form illustrate the social context of and the attitudinal reasons for environmental destruction, lending support to the direct accusations.

The pond motif is taken up once more by Czechowski in 'Industrieviertel P.' (1989), a long poem of irregular form which relates a visit to an industrial district of Leipzig. Here the poet retreats from the express environmental commitment of 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet' and returns to the recording of the shabby environment, as undertaken in 'Peripherie'. Now, however, this state is presented as normal and there is no hope of improvement. The subject of the poem, a power station which appears to be functioning incongruously as a fish-farm and fish-processing factory, is introduced as if it were a curiosity for the jaded poet:

Kaum hatte ich geklagt,
Es fehle mir an Gelegenheiten für neue Gedichte,
Sagte K.: Hier -
Und ein Rauchfähnchen entstieg ihrem Munde -
In diesem vergammelten Teich
Beim Kraftwerk züchten sie Karpfen.

The scenes of antiquated industry at the power

plant, whose only use is humorously said to be 'zur dreischichtigen Fabrikation/ Vierpfündiger volkseigner Fische', clearly point to the stagnation of the country, and there is a further parallel with the self-admitted debility of the lyric subject. The miserable reality is still capable of provoking some (self-deprecatory) feelings in him, but in the context of the poem both world and self are now viewed with resigned detachment:

Sie [die Werktätigen] schufteten im Schweiß ihres
Angesichts

Und vertrieben die Ratten vom nahen Kanal,
Die sich immer wieder
Der auf dem Fließband liegenden Fische
Bemächtigen wollten, in ihren Augen
Warn hundert Jahre
Als wie ein einziger Tag.

Von seiner Zinne

Sah Lehmann*

Mit großem Vergnügen das Treiben. O nature morte,
Wieder s_ohe ich dich und dein Elend, und fühl mich
sogleich

Als der Affe mit sieben Gängen,
Von denen nur drei
Noch funktionieren.

* *Lehmann, Richard*, Kapitalist, Begründer des

Industrieviertels Leipzig-Plagwitz [footnote beneath poem]

The speaker's helplessness before the wretched state of nature in the city (humans, rats, fish) is a sign of the end of Czechowski's nature and environmental poetry. The contention of 'Im Allgemeinen' that it is now 'too late' for nature poetry (the 'green poem')³⁷ is supported here by the living death of nature in industrial society. The strong implication contained in 'Im Allgemeinen' that it is also too late for environmental ('green') poetry is supported here by the permanence of nature's plight and the inability of the speaker, indeed of any person, to do anything. Man's relationship with nature, once intimate, has now grown so remote that the carp are now only consumed in a highly processed form as fish paste.³⁸ The speaker's final aimless attempt to flee from reality shows that there is no escape from it, and for the poet himself there remains only the recording of decline and despair.

Wulf Kirsten's 'verlandendes torfloch' (written 1981) can usefully be compared with Czechowski's 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet'. 'verlandendes torfloch' comes from the same period and has a similar subject-matter, a flooded, originally man-made peat cutting which has

become a wildlife refuge but which is now decaying amid a uniform arable landscape. A basic difference, though, is that the form and language of Kirsten's poem give it a certain beauty which 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet' consciously lacks. The outward form is more concise and regular, consisting of five stanzas of four short, approximately even lines each, and this is matched by a balanced, smooth development of the content: the first stanza locates the peat cutting among the fields; the middle three build up a picture of the pool, creating an atmosphere of eerie decay; the final one returns to the wider view and closes the poem with the image of a flight of ducks disappearing into the night.

A closer look at the poem reveals that the way in which the peat pit is described gives it a harsh beauty absent from the reshaped landscapes in 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet' and in Kirsten's poems 'dorf' (written 1974) and 'das haus im acker' (written 1981).³⁹ There terms expressing violence are used to emphasise the sudden spoiling of natural beauty, but here a gradual process of decay from a better state is described with well-chosen, if ungraceful, words, e.g. 'der verkrustete schlammsaum/ rings um den siechenden tümpel'. This difference is also apparent if one compares the passage from 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet' on page 279 above with the strikingly similar third stanza of 'verlandendes torfloch':

die uferweiden grünen auf abruf.
über dem sinkenden spiegel
gespenstern skelette, wo
vormals ein erlicht gedieh.

In this instance the dead trees again appear ghost-like but are not 'splintered', while the gradually 'sinking' surface of the water contrasts with the 'extinguished eyes' in the other poem. The repetition of sounds serves to intensify the mood in both passages, but while Czechowski's lines are varied in length and metre with a tendency towards prose, in Kirsten's poem there is a tension between the metre resting on three stresses per line and words like 'uferweiden' and 'schlammsaum' which bear a primary and a secondary stress. This typical technique of Kirsten's, like his choice of words, does manifest what Eberhard Haufe calls 'ein prinzipielles Mißtrauen gegenüber jeder [herkömmlich] "schönen" Rede, jedem herkömmlichen Sprachwohl laut'.⁴⁰ In this poem, though, Kirsten employs his new poetic language to express the new beauty of the degraded landscape, in accordance with the need enunciated in 'schiefergebirge' (written 1976): 'schiefergebirge,/ beschreib seine schönheit anders.'⁴¹

The explicit environmental commitment of 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet' is absent, but this description of a desolate evening scene is not simply a projection of

personal melancholy: Kirsten is poetically lamenting the human mistreatment of nature which he sees in the landscape, whereas he once praised the active human presence there (see sections 3 and 4 below). What was once presumably a bog has been ploughed up into 'ackerland, prosaisch/ bewachsen mit rüben und hafer', that is, deprived of its natural poetry, which the wild remnant preserves for a while in a sombre form. The sheep who sign the mud with the mark of an illiterate and the 'spitzschnabel,/ der nur gick sagen kann' have no voice in a human-dominated world. In the final image of a 'V' of ducks flying, like warplanes, in echelon, animals do become threatening for a moment, but in a world totally refashioned by their human enemies they have no refuge but death:

über den feldern, vollkommen melioriert,
kreist ein entenkeil in schöner staffel,
bis die nacht ihren schilfmantel öffnet
und schließt im lufthauch flügelnder stille.

However, the ambiguous images of this poem, which lacks the dominant environmental and social message of 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet, are open to more than an ecological interpretation. On the existential level, the strange, sometimes threatening natural world which

contains incomprehensible messages or signs is found also in Günter Eich's poems from *Botschaften des Regens* (1955) and in many of Peter Huchel's poems, e.g. 'Das Zeichen' (1963)⁴² - where a similar image of ducks flying at evening is used. When one is faced with such a reality, the best course seems to be to wait for release by death, following the example of the willows and the ducks (compare 'Das Zeichen' and Eich's 'Ende eines Sommers' from the above-mentioned volume).⁴³ 'verlandendes torfloch' appears to refer particularly to existence in an increasingly uniform, technologically influenced modern world where vitality and autonomy have almost disappeared, even from the last refuges like poetry (in this 'prosaic' world). Even more specifically, the wretched state of the forsaken animals and trees and the stagnation of the pool are a metaphor for the plight of individuals, including writers, under pressure to conform in the 'monocultural' society of the contemporary GDR.

We have seen that in environmental poetry the ruined pond both serves as an example of ecological destruction and has a range of transferred meanings, such as the broken harmony between man and nature, the impairment of life's wholeness and social stagnation. The narrative prose text examined here, an episode from Matthias Körner's *Die Totenkeule* (1989), uses a case of interference with a pond in the former way, but it should

be noted that other prose works have given the motif symbolic aspects: in Jurij Koch's *Der Kirschbaum* (1984) a threatened pond harbours mysterious forces which resist the destructive onslaught of the modern world, while the functions of example and symbol are combined in Joachim Walther's prose monologue 'Oben hinaus und nirgends an' (1987).⁴⁴

Like 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet', Körner's pond episode, which covers six pages at the most, describes the harmful consequences of a campaign to raise fish production. The story related is that of the failed attempt by the collective farm chairman Heiner Mitzig to establish a carp pond in the village of Wuttkow some time in the later 1970s. The plan to improve the Toad Pond is introduced at the end of one of the novel's many short sections (p. 194), and the next section, after a short comic interlude, moves on to the melioration, its failure and heavy cost (pp. 195-97). This incident plays a decisive role in the larger plot, for it provokes Hasenhuber's threat to have the Chairman dismissed, which leads in turn to Mitzig's attempt in the subsequent section to make Fänniger the chief accountant seem guilty (pp. 198-99) and thence to Mitzig's death.

Körner, using the succession of events and social context available in narrative prose, gives a more precise account than Czechowski of the process of

environmental destruction. While the poet rhetorically ascribes the new development at Malschwitz to the emptying of the seas of fish, the novelist reveals some of the true background in his narrative: a character who has moved to West Germany writes that she is now buying East German fish, and the freshwater fishermen of Wuttkow now have to 'intensify' fish 'production' from every pond as a substitute for the home population (p. 195). Czechowski, like Kirsten, depicts a scene on a particular occasion, but Körner works this into a sequence of environmental cause and effect:

Im Unkenteich wimmelten Karpfenrücken.

Schwüle lastete auf dem Unkenteich. Die Karpfen maulten aus dem Wasser nach Sauerstoff. Die Ausbeute war gering. Die Sträucher, die Bäume und das Schilf hielten selbst den leisesten Luftzug ab.

Nach Tagen schwammen die Karpfen bäuchlings und blähten auf und stanken erbärmlich.

Die Binnenfischer kescherten von einem Boot aus. Die Karpfen sahen schon durch die Maschen.

Im frühen Herbst rodeten die Fischer die Bäume und Sträucher und begifteten das Schilf.

Im folgenden Jahr blieb Fännigers Hefter 'Schilfvögel' leer. Es half den Fischen wenig. Der Wind strich über die Senke hinweg. (pp. 195-96)

Simple facts, added one to the other in short sentences, plainly demonstrate the mistakes made and their effects, and they also serve to build up a scene of horror more graphic, if less atmospheric, than those depicted with poetic techniques by Czechowski and Kirsten. The succession of worse and worse mistakes, which is perpetuated by Mitzig's disastrous solution of ploughing up the old pond and digging out a new one on waste ground, suggests furthermore that the fault lies in the system.

Where Czechowski directly points out guilty parties and illustrates the malaise of society with brief scenes, Körner lets the actions of certain characters reveal the authoritarian social mechanisms and instrumental ideology behind environmental destruction. In this short episode we see how a central economic decision is implemented at any cost by a powerful KAP chief. The subordinates who oppose the project, an old Sorbian farmer (that is, 'die Weisheit der Alten'), the chief accountant, who is also a bird-watcher, and the KAP engineer cannot prevail against Mitzig in spite of the soundness of their arguments. When Fänniger declares, 'Du schaffst es nicht, die Natur zu verbiegen', Mitzig gives a reply which typifies the functionaries' instrumental view of nature:

Wir ordnen uns die Natur unter. Der Mensch ist die

Krönung. Er ist vernünftig. Also kann er alles,
weiß alles und macht alles richtig. (p. 196)

The pond episode further reveals the irresponsible wasting of public money, the manipulation of accounts and other official abuses. Other parts of *Die Totenkeule* demonstrate the general social alienation shown in the final scene of 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet'. It seems that sharp, GDR-related environmental and social criticism such as could only be published in verse in 1981 was by 1988 (grudgingly) permitted in the more far-reaching and more widely-read form of a novel.

The section where Mitzig shies away from coercing Fänniger into a confession of guilt ends with Mitzig's nightmare that he is standing on the head of the *Philosophenstein*, trying in vain to open his eyes (p. 199). If we remember that Mitzig's father used to tell his son tales by this monolith, then imagination has lost its innocence and become the abode of fears. Comparable is the change from the comforting childhood and dreams in 'Erfahrungen mit Karpfen' to the destruction of the fairy-tales in 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet'. In *Die Totenkeule*, though, the symbolism of the pond is not utilised even to show the dispelling of illusions; this is probably owing to Körner's down-to-earth approach. At the most, the Toad Pond demonstrates nature's resistance to man's arrogant attempts to subject it.

The ancient, intimate and balanced relationship of man and nature invoked once more by Czechowski in 'Erfahrungen mit Karpfen' had grown unsustainable in GDR literature by the late 1970s, when many writers, in a repressive, disenchanting political atmosphere, broke with past illusions of many kinds. The ruined, or at least threatened, ponds in the literature of the early 1980s (in Czechowski, Kirsten, Koch and Walther) thus confront not only the reality of the man-nature relationship but also the truth about other conventional associations of the pond: the *spoiling* of nature's beauty, the *impairment* of life's wholeness, the *illusory character* of the private idyll, such as is found in Kirsch's 'Schöner See Wasseraug'. The ruined pond motifs bear further associations of the stagnation or shabbiness of society.

The treatment of the motif varies considerably. Kirsten's 'verlandendes torfloch' with its subjective, lyrical treatment lets images of darkness, decay and death suggest environmental, personal and social meanings, while Czechowski's polemical and more objective 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet' observes environment and society and makes critical assertions with a measure of emotion and ambiguity. Whereas the latter poem seeks to confront the reader with the truth, the former tends

towards quiet resignation. Environmental poetry is left behind in 'Industrieviertel P.' (1989), where Czechowski's use of the pond motif ends in resignation of a starker kind, despair in the face of inescapable social, environmental and personal stagnation.

In contrast with the prose passage from *Die Totenkeule*, which builds up a precise, objective picture of the process of ecological damage in its social context and thus demonstrates causes, the environmental poems use a temporally limited section of personal experience to suggest indirectly ('verlandendes torfloch') or point out directly ('Landschaftsschutzgebiet') what is going on. The observation and accusation undertaken by Czechowski does not yet amount to 'research into causes'. While *Die Totenkeule* shows the social reality of environmental destruction, 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet' and 'verlandendes torfloch' fulfil the equally valid functions respectively of drawing attention to the gravity of the destruction and of conveying its sadness.

3. Non-functional nature

Kirsten's 'verlandendes torfloch' is a sombre example of the tendency in GDR poetry of the Seventies and early Eighties to turn to places where nature

maintains a foothold in the regimented landscapes of country and town. This tendency was undoubtedly in part a reaction to the the agricultural intensification carried out with particular force in the Seventies (see chapter 3, section 2 above, and especially note 19). Peter Wensierski records not only ecological damage in the strict sense, but also 'eine nie gekannte ästhetische Monotonisierung und Entwertung des nord- und mitteldeutschen Landschaftsbildes'.⁴⁵ But, as is shown in Brecht's *Keunergeschichte* 'Herr K. und die Natur' (written around 1931), unutilised natural things in a (capitalist) world of 'Gebrauchsgegenstände' also give human beings the comforting sense of being more than a function themselves.⁴⁶ The GDR poets discussed here, criticising a more universally functionalised socialist society, diverge from Brecht's Marxist view by rejecting the useful, one essential part of his synthesis of utility value and natural individuality,⁴⁷ and by giving natural things a *higher* value because of their freedom from use. These things are not even planted deliberately in the street like Herr Keuner's tress, but grow or develop freely in unwanted or marginal locations. The poems are concerned with individuals in society and may be partly distinguished from those which use the landscape as a critical metaphor for GDR society as a whole.⁴⁸ But there is no return to the private idyll.

The motif of non-functional nature may have a

clearly political meaning, as in the poems 'Die Begrüßung' and 'Unkraut' (1972) by the persecuted poet Peter Huchel: there the weeds are like unruly people or thoughts in a regimented society.⁴⁹ This use of the motif is represented here by Günter Kunert's 'Natur II' (1977), whose subject-matter is discarded objects returning to a natural state. Environmental poems may contain similar political implications: Jens Gerlach's 'zeitenwandel' (significantly published in 1974, in a period of cultural liberalisation) ambiguously welcomes the return of natural disorder to the strictly ordered shore of a 'sogenanntes nutzgewässer'.⁵⁰ This double use of the motif is represented here by Pietraß's 'Durch die Blume' and Kirsten's 'ödland' (both written in the harsher atmosphere of 1981), which contrast the uniform cultivated landscape with the wild growth on waste ground. (There are also parallels in contemporaneous poems by Axel Schulze.)⁵¹

Kunert's 'Natur II' is a poem of striking ideas, conveyed, partly through images, in a series of short, free-verse sections. The poem makes an emblem out of a number of discarded objects, of which fresh and leached-out wood, bricks overgrown by grass and a warped cane armchair are named. A central, programmatic passage, given prominence by alliteration and variation of vowels,

states:

Was dem Regen ausgesetzt wird
dem Wind wie der Windstille
Winter und wieder Wärme
wandelt sein Wesen indem es
sein zweckdienliches Aussehen aufgibt

Like the items of rubbish, people who have been thrown away by society and exposed to their fate are thus able to regain their 'Natur-Freiheit' (Jürgen Haupt)⁵² and exist only for themselves. Like the bricks, they are 'der Mauergemeinschaft entkommen', separated from the body of society (the 'wall' reference clearly implies the GDR) but liberated from conformity and endowed with a new vitality represented by the green grass. In this poem we see a political transformation of the traditionally bourgeois desire, expressed in Kunert's poems since the early 1960s, of a subject threatened by dehumanising *Zivilisation* to escape to the natural 'Bezirk der Nichtverfügbarkeit, des "umsonst"' (Haupt).⁵³

The aphoristic conclusion, addressed to 'Ihr Bruchstücke ringsum', derives a moral appeal from the preceding metaphor:

Wahr ist die Welt nur
in allem was ihr nichts nützt

und: Den Ausgestoßenen allein
gehört der Mut zum nötigen
Verrat.

Truth is understood as resistance to objectification by a society with instrumental, dehumanising values, and those who resist require courage, for they face ostracism. In the East German context such resistance might have counted literally as 'treason'.

Viewed as a nature poem, 'Natur II' rejects Marxist anthropocentrism and values the autonomy of non-human as well as human individuals. Sympathy is shown for 'man-made' objects, such as 'Du seltsamer Sessel', which are moving from human determination (the ambivalent status of 'nature two') back into the purposeless existence of 'nature one' from which the materials originally came. The images of regression into a natural state suggest acceptance of fate and even death, when one's body is literally covered by grass. This attitude of resignation somewhat contradicts the call actively to disregard the norms of society. Two aspects that Haupt finds in Kunert's general rejection of *Zivilisation* in favour of nature - resignation and 'ein provokatives, verzweifelt-moralistisches Element: Suche nach "ganzer" Menschheit'⁵⁴ - have here been imperfectly married.

Pietraß's 'Durch die Blume' has a more usual subject-matter for a nature poem than 'Natur II', that is wild flowers which colonise a patch of bare soil and rubble, but the form of the poem is innovative. Like some other of this author's poems, 'Durch die Blume' has a prose form in which rhymes, following no conventional metrical pattern, form a unifying network throughout the text.⁵⁵ In the first few lines the pleasing nature of the rhymes and alliteration coincides with the pleasing meaning:

Ungerufen aufs nackte Feld, von keinem Menschen
hinbestellt, treten die wilden Blumen. Wo Humus
fehlt, halten sie Haus, rollen sie ihren Teppich
aus.

But as the poem progresses, there appears a tension between the pleasing character of the rhymes, and now also puns, and the seriousness of what they relate:

Namenlose, Samenreiche, fechten ihre Wurzelstreiche
mit dem harten Gras.

and finally:

Sandmohn und Rainfarn leben und weben. Raupen nahn,
den Boden zu ebnen. Verduftet ist der wilde Tag.

Gefragt ein andrer Schlag für Beete und Rabatten;
die Sanduhr der Monokultur.

The disquieting tension mentioned above highlights the tragedy in the apparently trivial bulldozing of a waste patch.

'Durch die Blume' clearly displays the motif of non-functional nature: the flowers, though including the useful species camomile, clover and lucerne, are praised because they have appeared spontaneously rather than in accordance with man's designs and because (like the young plants growing from rubbish-strewn mud in the photograph opposite by the author)⁵⁶ they thrive on barren, marginal ground. The poem clearly refers to real flowers and the enlivening effect they have on the landscape, but the transferred, social meaning is not far from the surface. The wild plants are like people who manage to establish a lively and colourful existence on the fringes of society, most of which is implicitly occupied by a dull and well-nourished majority (cultivated crops). It is not too far-fetched to see the wild flowers as squatters in the second sentence quoted above. Rather like Kunert, Pietraß speaks of the struggle and the 'courage' of the plants. In this case, the designation 'Samenreiche' may hint at a future proliferation even after their destruction.

The title 'Durch die Blume' refers to the poem's method of speaking about people in a veiled manner and, what is more, through the medium of flowers. This contrasts with a further, brutal sense, the relentless destruction of the flowers by bulldozers, which are given a particular connotation of voracity by the term 'Raupen' (to mention two of the puns). Intensive horticulture or agriculture and, it is implied, East German society and culture leave no room for autonomous, wild growths but seek to convert every square metre to productive use. The closing image of 'die Sanduhr der Monokultur' could either be counting down the minutes to the death of the flowers or the longer period until the poor (sandy?) soil is exhausted and the monoculture crop itself fails. At the same time and with the same humanitarian concern, Pietraß pleads both for the preservation of wild plants and waste ground and for the right of human individuals to develop in their own way.

Like 'Durch die Blume', Kirsten's 'ödland' is a prose poem about a wild area of ground. Instead of Pietraß's compact text with its rhyme and word-play, here we have a loose structure in which a recognisable speaker (though not present in the first person) describes features of the landscape in the manner of an internal monologue. In contrast with the rather generalised pictures of nature conveyed in 'Natur II' and 'Durch die

Blume', the detailed, sequential description in 'ödland' makes the reader follow the speaker through a specific landscape, the location of which is named in the final sentence as 'am stillen nebenlauf der Gramme'. Although the depiction of reality in 'ödland', like that in 'Durch die Blume', is subjective in that it is somewhat coloured by the writer's feelings, and although both poems have more than one level of meaning, Schuhmann's remarks about the sobriety and factuality of environmental verse would still fit both of them.

In keeping with the motif, Kirsten values the non-functionality of an infertile wasteland 'wo nichts wächst, was der landwirtschaft nutzen abwirft' and the spontaneity of 'stillgelegte kiesgruben, in denen die natur freie hand hat'. (This shows just how far the poet's attitude towards man's exploitation of nature had changed in the sixteen years since 1965, when he sang the praises of a crop-spraying 'feldzug' against the Colorado beetle in the 'retouched' fields.)⁵⁷ The vitality of nature, also stressed in 'Durch die Blume', here becomes a force which transcends individuals, an 'ungezähmter lebensdrang windbreit ausgeufert'. This vital force is expressed in the unbroken pride, luxuriance, beauty and diversity of the wild plants: 'ein disteljahrgang promeniert stolz erhobenen hauptes'; 'im weglosen, wild wuchernden grasfilz punktet der enzian seine tiefblauen

herbstkelche dicht über der narbe hin'. A further virtue of the wasteland is that nature has required no special protection to proliferate here; there is no sign saying 'betreten verboten! reservat für füchse und niederwild', which would be a kind of exploitation for the benefit of hunters. The wasteland is simply there, open to anyone who cares to walk across it in the same spontaneous spirit in which the plants have grown there. 'ödland', written in the same year as 'verlandendes torfloch', suggests that Kirsten, unlike Czechowski in 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet', can still see the vitality and beauty of nature as a source of encouragement for people, even if those qualities are now confined to isolated patches of landscape.

Kirsten's picture of non-functional nature is distinguished from those of Kunert and Pietraß by its concrete location, closely observed detail and the traces of human activity in the land, such as the gravel pits. It accords in these respects with the author's earlier work and his public statements on landscape poetry, as opposed to a nature poetry which is not localised and particularised and which lacks social references.⁵⁸ The placing of wild nature rather than man in the centre, though, marks a shift from Marxist principles. In distinction to Kunert's things, which have escaped from the human sphere, the overgrown objects in 'ödland' still evoke apparently personal memories of

the people who worked here, e.g.: 'von hundskamille üppig überwuchert brandschutt und eisenteile, gefertigt vom allzeit fröhlichen landmaschinenbauer, gott hab ihn selig.'

It is paradoxical that the so-called wasteland, teeming with diverse life, should rise 'aus dem fruchtbaren ackerland, monoton gebreitet bis in alle morgenweiten'. The poem shares in the common social/political metaphor, the featureless fields standing for a uniform society and the wildlife for those who refuse to be bowed, but the several layers of meaning in 'ödland' give it a depth which 'Natur II' and 'Durch die Blume' lack. The wasteland is an actual landscape, a refuge for wildlife, a manifestation of the life force and a historic place where people have worked as well as a social metaphor. The cultivated land, in contrast, has no distinguishing features.

The valuing of natural things for their uselessness in GDR poetry is in one sense a coded advocacy of the autonomy of the individual in a regimented society. The more frequent occurrence of this metaphor in the second half of the Seventies and first half of the Eighties may be partly due to the fact that after a period of cultural liberalisation many writers were now themselves suffering the official stifling of their creativity, as Huchel had

earlier done. The 'non-functional nature' motif in this period, though, also comes to express concern about the ecological and aesthetic impoverishment of the countryside. More sharply than the water motifs, it demonstrates the association between environmental and social/political criticism in GDR nature poetry. In the political poem 'Natur II', Kunert uses nature existing for its own sake as an encouraging metaphor for the outcasts of society. In 'Durch die Blume', Pietraß gives weight to the literal side of the metaphor by expressing support for wild plants under threat as well as implicitly for people in an analogous situation. Pietraß's poem with its poetic techniques and Kunert's poem with its ideas both make a strong impression, but it is Kirsten who integrates the above themes with a graphic description of a concrete historic landscape, which makes 'ödland' the richest poem.

4. Dying villages

Chapter 3 showed that environmental criticism in GDR literature went hand-in-hand with social criticism, for the technological and societal changes which damaged the physical environment also weakened community ties and estranged people from their past. This section will look

at a group of environmental poems which address the social aspect more centrally or directly than those studied previously in this chapter: poems on the topic of declining or threatened villages. Criticism of rural changes developed in poetry, as also in prose, from the mid to late Sixties onward (see the overviews of Kirsten's and Lorenc's poems below).

Brecht's programmatic poem 'Der Rauch' (written 1953)⁵⁹ shows how the landscape in GDR poetry is given meaning by the formative effect of human inhabitation as well as of human activity. The poems on dying villages revise this Marxist literary concept, together with other conventional topoi: the balance of man-made and natural things such as is seen in 'Der Rauch'; the more fundamental man-nature harmony seen in Huchel's 'Der Knabenteich'; the wholeness of rural life; the integrity of the village community.

The poems studied here treat the 'dying villages' topic in an interesting variety of ways. Of the two which are also landscape poems, Kirsten's pioneering 'dorf' (written 1974) is a forceful criticism of the neglected state of a village, while Czechowski's 'Im Seekreis' (1981) is a thematically broader, reflective description of an equally neglected mining landscape. The other two poems deal more subjectively with the sudden end of a village: Kito Lorenc's 'Dorfbegräbnis' (written 1979) is a lament for a community destroyed by

lignite mining, and Pietraß's 'Eiche' (1987) encapsulates the death of a village in a metaphorical and aphoristic way. On the formal level, the strict metrical pattern of 'Dorfbegräbnis' contrasts with the free verse of 'dorf' and 'Im Seekreis'.

The poems of Wulf Kirsten have always attested a deep love of his home villages ('sieben sätze über meine dörfer', written 1965). This love was qualified in the earlier years by a rejection of the outdated and an enthusiasm for modernisation of the village ('Kyleb', written 1965), which, however, soon gave way to a more realistic and balanced view of the old and the new ('dorfstraße', written 1969). With the writing of 'dorf' in 1974, Kirsten was already defending the valuable in the old village against the depredations of social change. Since then he has written several other critical or elegiac poems on aspects of rural change which are also to be found in prose works like Erwin Strittmatter's 'Kraftstrom' (1969), Jurič Brezan's *Bild des Vaters* (1982) and Matthias Körner's *Die Totenkeule* (1988): the disappearance of old skills in 'werktätig' and 'schmiede' (both written 1975); the isolation of old farmers in modern times in 'begegnung mit einem alten bauern' (written 1975) and 'das haus im acker' (written 1981); the devastation of the environment by industrial

agriculture in the latter poem.⁶⁰ Kirsten usually places working life at the centre of his poems and gives much less attention to the customs and folklore which are so important to Lorenc.

The title of 'dorf' fulfils a similar role to that of 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet', arousing reassuring associations which contrast starkly with what is described in the text. Indeed, in the course of the poem the conventional attributes of a village are systematically negated: its organic wholeness; its harmonious situation amid beautiful landscape; rural activities and folk culture; the 'things' and 'words' of the country; until in a final surreal image the village itself disappears. Like 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet', this is a polemical counterblast to the loss of what is dear to the author. The form of the poem supports this content: again like Czechowski's poem, 'dorf' is written in a visually ragged free-verse form which conveys disorder, but here the shorter, terser lines, which frequently lack a main verb, acquire a special weight individually and together lend the poem expressive force (see, for example, especially the second quotation below).

In this poem, occupation by people is a curse rather than a blessing for the landscape, as the opening scene indicates:

die zersiedelte siedlung,
wie sie verwegen abhängt,
zerfleddert und zerpflückt
zwischen wilden müllkippen,
die sich verzetteln
von unort zu unort.

The degradation of the village environment, powerfully expressed through the concentrated repetition of prefixes with a negative sense, is plainly the responsibility of the inhabitants themselves. Although no human social context in the manner of 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet' is depicted, the signs in the landscape are sufficient to point to a causative change in social attitudes, in which a sense of communal responsibility has given way to irresponsible selfishness. Besides the small, cumulative changes made by individuals to the face of the landscape, larger alterations caused by agriculture and forestry are also singled out:

kahlschlaggesellschaften
in aufsteigender linie.
unentwegt fluß-lebensläufe begradigt.

As Wolfgang Ertl comments, Kirsten uses striking metaphors to mark the interconnections between disturbing changes to nature and the responsibility of society. The

rivers, straightened for the sake of society's progress, are also signs of a forced straightening of society's life, a social 'deforestation' which is destroying the traditional village.⁶¹ The images in 'dorf' do not only give an admonitory indication of what is going wrong and the reader's part in this; partly through metaphor, they build up a larger picture of society which succinctly, though not precisely, points out socio-economic causes of environmental degradation and individual and collective responsibility for it.

Social and environmental changes have been accompanied by the loss of traditional culture and activities ('das lied der beerenpflückerinnen'). The centrally located image of broken pianos lying upside-down on the rubbish heap, their pedals pressed by the weed ground elder ('geißfuß') hints at a topsy-turvy, culturally impoverished society.

After this point, 'dorf' turns from an admonition about the state of real villages into a fantastic projection of where things might lead. In this activating, warning poem, the discarded 'mahltrichter' or mill hopper does not return gradually to a natural state but acts as an agent of destruction, devouring first of all the 'things':

schrillte noch eine grille im schlehenstrauch?
flog himmelwärts des landmanns liedermeister?

As the cricket and the skylark disappear, the modern villagers have already grown estranged from nature and from the elevated feelings that it used to inspire in poetry. With the disappearance of the 'things', the associated vocabulary or 'words' goes the same way. Following its attributes, the actual village itself is at the end shown disappearing into the mouth of the hopper:

das dorf,
sieh, wie es verschlungen wird,
am ende verschlingt es sich selbst,
sieh, wie es hingeht
gegen die scherbenumkränzte leere!
sieh, wie es ziegel um ziegel
im mahltrichter verschwindet.

This grotesque image carries the self-destructive tendencies of the village through to their worst possible conclusion, as Klaus Schuhmann indicates. Schuhmann fails to appreciate, though, that this fantastic extrapolation, which renders the village such an 'Idylle des Schreckens',⁶² goes far beyond the sober description of discoveries which he identifies as typical of environmental poetry (and which can be seen in the first

half of 'dorf'). The conclusion may, though, also be regarded as a metaphorical description of what is really happening: the village is losing its character as a village before our very eyes. From this point of view, the 'void' corresponds to an image found in later poems by Kirsten: the denatured village as a tangible 'nothing' or 'nowhere'.⁶³

The decaying villages and landscapes in Czechowski's 'Im Seekreis' are the subject of environmental and social criticism, but the poem does not *concentrate* on criticism as 'dorf' does. As in several other poems in *Was mich betrifft* (1981),⁶⁴ the critical element here forms part of broader reflections on the history of a place, and even on History. What Czechowski has said about landscapes in his poetry applies precisely to the Seekreis, a mining district between Halle and Eisleben, as he depicts it: 'Ich brauche, um schreiben zu können, sogar geschichtlich belastete Landschaften'. The inner historical truth of a landscape, which may take a fictional form, is more important than historical knowledge.⁶⁵ In this poem, which is sober in tone throughout, the observation of reality often leads on to this kind of literary conjecture, woven around historical fact. Somewhat as in 'dorf', the present disorder of the place and the hardness of past lives are conveyed with

the help of a visually ragged free-verse form in which the sentences are broken up by the short lines and rendered brusque and jerky by the omission of verbs, apposition and subordination (see for example the quotations below).

The central part of 'Im Seekreis' gives a graphic depiction of a village in social, economic and physical decline:

Wenn jetzt,
Früh halbfünf, der Schichtbus nach Eisleben
Abgefahren ist, schlappen später
Die alten Weiber des Dorfs
Zum Konsum nach Milch. Ein einsamer Hund
Schläft auf der Treppe der Kirche,
Deren Uhr
Keine Zeiger mehr hat.

Here the decline of the village into wretchedness, aimlessness and social disintegration is clearly criticised, especially when highlighted by the preceding evocation of the solidarity and hard but dogged lives of the local miners and peasants in the old days. The historic context of the present description also enables the poet to criticise modern people's ignorance of their past: the opening image of a graveyard containing generations of dead is followed by the question 'Wer/

Bewahrt ihr Gedächtnis?', to which the poem provides the answer that local people are forgetting their forebears, whose memory is preserved only by things. On the other hand, the same long-term perspective also makes the decline of the community seem like an inevitable natural development. The succeeding image of 'Das Rad der Geschichte,/ In Fördertürme montiert' points to a historical cycle of rise and fall which operates even in industrial society. Czechowski's view of history here, while still stressing repetition, is now much bleaker than the tenacious human continuity in 'Erfahrungen mit Karpfen'.

'Im Seekreis' has many points of contact, which may be intentional allusions, with some of Volker Braun's poems from the volume *Gegen die symmetrische Welt* (1974),⁶⁶ the chief difference being the contrast between Czechowski's cyclical or even pessimistic view of historical change and Braun's earlier optimistic belief in upward progress.⁶⁷ The idea of the 'Durchgearbeitete Landschaft' from Braun's poem of that title is repeated in Czechowski's description of the Seekreis mining landscape:

Senkungsgebiet, eine
Von unzählbaren Geschlechtern
Um- und umgewendete Landschaft,

Seit Luthers und Müntzers Zeiten
Abgetäuft und unterminiert.

Braun's poem celebrates the pioneering work of miners in opening up untouched land and overturning natural strata. The landscape they left behind has then been transformed by human skill into an earthly paradise. Czechowski's poem corrects Braun's unhistorical view and idealism.⁶⁸ Here the landscape is seen as shaped by human activity, but this is a sober view of a historical process. Mining in fact seems to have had a harmful effect on the landscape, turning it into a man-made wasteland which is rendered treacherous by hidden workings and is only gradually being reclaimed by nature ('sich langsam/Wiederaufrebende Hänge'). The description of the decaying village does, though, point back to a time when the human presence on the land was a positive, enlivening factor.

In contrast with 'Durchgearbeitete Landschaft', Braun's contemporaneous poem 'Landwüst' shows a *historical* landscape, strongly marked by the lives, the work and especially the strife of past generations. In this it is like 'Im Seekreis', where, for example, the derelict seign^oeurial chapel is still stained by the blood of (Communist) rebels from 1923. It is even the case that both poems trace local history back to the early sixteenth century: the age of Luther and Müntzer in

'Im Seekreis', the Peasants' Wars in 'Landwüst'. But while the village of Landwüst is still developing towards an exciting future, the unnamed 'village' in the poem 'Im Seekreis' is in decline, dominated by a past grown static.

By placing the present decay in its past context, the poet is in fact conducting research into its causes. Although both the run-down of the local mining industry and the larger cycle of history appear to be unstoppable forces in this regard, the poet finds it worth criticising society's neglect of the dying village and ignorance of the past. The conclusion of the poem also criticises the new order which is replacing the old: the poet speaks of the impoverished baron

Der zu Buche gebracht hat,
Was die Lebenden langsam vergessen,
Während unten die Stadt aus weißem Beton
Ihre Straßenzungen bergan schickt
Und die Kinder die neuen Legenden
Zu buchstabieren beginnen.

Thus not so long ago in this area the financially poor Baron von Schulze-Gallera gathered cultural riches in his *Wanderungen durch den Saalkreis* (1913-24),⁶⁹ and, as is indicated earlier in the poem, local people kept 'Die

alten Legenden' of Communist rebel heroes alive during the Nazi dictatorship. Now, though, new, official legends are being taught to children in the city, replacing the old, popular ones of their village ancestors. The decline of the old is undoubtedly being accelerated by the aggressive expansion of the new, represented by the white concrete (i.e. featureless and inhospitable) city of Halle-Neustadt. The ending of the poem reads like a pessimistic reversal of the optimistic concluding images of Braun's poems from *Gegen die symmetrische Welt*, 'Landwüst' (the outlook from a mountain onto the future), 'Durchgearbeitete Landschaft' ('der weiße neugeborene Strand/ Den wir betreten [...]') and 'Haß Georg Braun u.a.' (the poet's child, the image of his ancestors).

Like Kirsten, Kito Lorenc has always shown a deep love of his home region (and of his Sorbian people) in his work, but Lorenc early became ambivalent about the benefits of progress. Thus in 'Aber wenn ihr weint' (written 1965) the poet mourns the fact that the forests of his childhood are being cut down for the sake of brown coal extraction, but the lament is qualified: rather than going to war, young people now move from forest to forest

und fällen Wald für Wald, denn
unter den Wäldern liegt Kohle und

sie haben wohl recht.⁷⁰

It did then seem possible to achieve a balance between industrial development and the conservation of traditional culture: 'gründlich/ verlegen wir Dorf für Dorf einschließlich Friedhof' ('Versuch über uns', written 1967).⁷¹ The author has, though, since realised that he and his colleagues were trying to compensate for the environmental effects of the lignite industry 'mit Kunst-Düngern zur Menschenschonung', just as extra fertiliser was sprayed on forest plantations to make up for sulphur dioxide damage.⁷² The poem 'Dorfbegräbnis', occasioned by the destruction of the Sorbian village of Tzschelln,⁷³ mourns the loss without the earlier qualification but with a strong critical element.

An important feature distinguishing 'Dorfbegräbnis' from 'Im Seekreis' and 'dorf' is its regular verse form, of which the first stanza provides an example:

Hing den ganzen harten Winter durch
tropfte ab im weichen Mai
Vögel zogen drüber hin
eh der Sand das Fell versoff

The poem consists of seven quatrains of this kind, the first line of each stanza having nine syllables and the

others usually seven. A trochaic metre is followed throughout. This regular form, which may well be traditional, emphasises both the restrained emotionality of the content and the orderliness and integrity of the traditional way of life described in the first half of the poem. Moreover, the even metre, absence of rhyme and correspondence between lines and sense-units make the lines flow smoothly. As will be seen below, the natural and folkloric images in 'Dorfbegräbnis' contribute to the sense of a traditional order. Lorenc's word-play, though, like that of Pietraß, allows things to be seen in a fresh way and new connections to be made.

In the first three-and-a-half stanzas, the death and burial of an old man are described in a symbolic, emotive way which contrasts with the essentially factual description of 'Im Seekreis' and 'dorf'. As in Koch's *Der Kirschbaum*, the images show how human life and death in the traditional village are interwoven with the processes of nature (an order which is broken in the second half of the poem). In the stanza quoted above, for example, the tenacity of the dying man during the winter and his death in the spring are, in a Sorbian idiom,⁷⁴ seen as analogous to the behaviour of an icicle. The second stanza, describing the old man's dying moments, obliquely reveals his mental world to be a traditional one of nature magic and old-fashioned trades.⁷⁵ In the funeral we see reflections of a

traditional belief in the sympathetic response of nature
to man:

Weh der greise Vater lästernd schrie
vor der Grube Herr nimm mich
An den Föhrenrinden fror
der Trompetenschall zu Bernstein

Und das Weiß der Klageweiber stieg
in den blühnden Knöterich
[...]

The old man's entreaty before the grave for the Lord to
take him acquires a special poignancy if the word 'Grube'
is also understood to mean the lignite 'pit' which is
about to swallow up his village.

The 'village burial' in the first half of the poem
similarly foreshadows with sad irony the 'burial of the
village' in the second half. After the central turning
point (the finding of brown coal), the regular form and
often folksy diction, which in the first half agree in
character with the traditional order they are describing,
come into tension with the new violence of the content,
and novel images take the place of the folkloric ones:

Trug der Bagger zart in seinem Maul
fort die Kirche ihren Hof
da der Denkmalspfleger sprang
aus dem neuen Bett des Flusses

in die Schneise durch das Biotop
über Lausitzer Kultur
pfiff in seinen Händen die
Urne mit dem Seelenloch

As in Pietraß's 'Durch die Blume', the tension mentioned above highlights the tragedy of the destruction. These stanzas clearly point out the destructiveness of lignite mining, and of technological progress in general. The graveyard here is not shown carefully transferred to a new site as in 'Versuch über uns', but is roughly dug up (and maybe even dumped) with none of the traditional respect for the dead. Equally ruthless treatment is given to a wildlife site (biotope) and to a burial ground of the Bronze Age 'Lusatian Culture'.⁷⁶ The term 'Lausitzer Kultur' makes a punning connection between the loss of history and the loss of living Sorbian culture.

The conclusion of the poem obliquely criticises the purpose of the mining, the provision of a comfortable, modern lifestyle. The picturing of lignite as honey ('Scheibenhonig// der in fernbeheizter Wabe hing') emphasises the tempting nature of the product, which

promises a *dolce vita*. Is it worth sacrificing a village merely for the sake of such modern conveniences as district heating for honeycomb-like flats in town? (if one sees the further sense of 'Wohnscheibe' in the final image.) The resettled villagers themselves will have to adapt to life in this artificial, urban order in future.

Like 'Dorfbegräbnis', Pietraß's 'Eiche' is essentially a lament for a lost village, but one which is simpler in both form and content. It is a brief poem consisting of very short lines which give its plain statements a special weight. The rhymes and metrical echoes between lines, which follow no set pattern, accentuate feeling and emphasise the unity of the poem. The central idea of 'Eiche' is the simile of village as tree, an integral organism which has grown over the centuries and seems indestructible. The simile is introduced in the aphoristic opening:

Ein Dorf
wie ein Baum
kaum zu bezwingen.

The middle lines describe two scenes from village life, animated conversation in the pub and singers rehearsing in the green shade of old trees. Somewhat as

in 'Dorfbegräbnis', these scenes create a picture of an old, intact rural order which is then shown broken.

The aphoristic conclusion takes up the words of the opening again but demonstrates the proposition of indestructibility to be false:

Dorf wie ein Baum
am Rand der Welt.
Erst wenn er fällt
siehst du
die Jahresringe.

The poet regrets the 'felling' of the village with the accompanying loss of social life, customs and history, but he also hints at the partial guilt that the indifferent public bears. Because the doomed village is out of the way, 'at the edge of the world' as far as most people are concerned, they do not take notice until it is too late. The use of 'du' rather than 'man', moreover, points out the responsibility of the reader.

The conventional topoi noted at the beginning of this section undergo significant changes of content or context in the poems studied, which thus emphasise losses in rural life. In 'dorf', human habitation and activity have in recent times had a destructive rather than a creative effect on the landscape, while their

influence in 'Im Seekreis' must be judged ambiguous. The balance of man-made and natural things is upset in 'dorf', the harmony of man and nature ended in 'Dorfbegräbnis'. The integrity of the community is broken in all the poems, with an explicit or implicit impairment of individual lives.

The literary approaches to the environmental and social subject-matter vary more widely than the basic themes above. While 'Im Seekreis' and 'dorf' essentially undertake a factual description of villages and landscape which conveys the wretchedness of their state, 'Dorfbegräbnis' and 'Eiche' depict the death of a village with subjective images and metaphors which make an emotional appeal to the reader. The contrasting poetic forms chosen by Czechowski and Kirsten on the one hand and Lorenc and Pietraß on the other serve the same respective purposes *inter alia*. Whereas 'Im Seekreis' and 'Eiche' both remain within the bounds of factuality and sobriety, the sheer wealth of symbolism in 'Dorfbegräbnis' and the fantastic exaggeration in the later part of 'dorf' contradict Schuhmann's findings for the majority of environmental poems. All the poems, in accordance with Schuhmann's conclusions, give 'signs' or hints to reconsider what is going on and one's own actions, but the observations of Czechowski and Kirsten go further, forming a context which indicates the causes

of environmental changes.

5. Man and other species

The poems covered so far have been centrally concerned with local, current environmental problems, sometimes also with their social or historical roots. In the late 1970s and 1980s, though, GDR environmental poetry developed a strong complementary emphasis on global and future concerns.⁷⁷ As in the parallel tendency which flourished in West German poetry from the early 1970s onwards, new anxieties about worldwide ecological damage, together with older fears of nuclear war, were often expressed in images of global disaster, sometimes of biblical origin. In East and West, a loss of faith in established values and in the prospects of social progress undoubtedly also played a part in this poetic trend.⁷⁸

Out of the broad 'global' and 'future' tendency in GDR verse, I have chosen to concentrate on the motif of competition or conflict between human beings and other species, which allows the warning prospect of a dark future to be envisaged (who will inherit the earth?). This motif may be traced back to GDR poets' use of animal images in the early 1960s as metaphors for the possible

destruction of mankind by a nuclear war or other technological disaster, e.g. Günter Kunert's 'Laika', Stephan Hermlin's 'Die Vögel und der Test' and Rainer Kirsch's 'Gespräch mit dem Saurier'.⁷⁹ The last-mentioned poem contemplates the danger that humanity might be brought down by 'Erfindungen, Technik, Verbrauch,/ Atomstrahlung, Mutationen ...', but finishes optimistically with a vision of escape from this fate. However, in most of the later poems which use the motif of species competition, e.g. Kunert's 'Nature Morte' (1983) with its 'apokalyptisches Heer der Ameisen',⁸⁰ the future becomes unequivocally dark. Even in Jens Gerlach's humorous poem 'kriegserklärung' (1974),⁸¹ the 'war' that the well-intentioned speaker wages against the landscape is a serious matter.

In this section we shall look at two pairs of works. Czechowski's poems 'Die Vögel' (1981) and 'Wir' (1987), which envisage two variants of global disaster, raise questions about the value of such unspecific images. Two texts by Pietraß, the poem 'Die Überlebende' and a closely related section of the essay 'Vom Vergehen der Arten' (both written 1982), share a common subject, the rat as the rival of man, but a comparison shows considerable differences between the genres.

'Die Vögel' is a contemplative poem whose ideas are couched in a laconic, sober style and in a free, prose-

like verse form. The first two sections warn that the apparent tenacity of familiar animals, like that of ourselves, is deceptive:

Die Vögel

Fliegen noch, es sind
Meistens Spatzen und Krähen, sie
Überleben, scheint es,
Wie wir:

Angepaßt
Dem grauen Himmel,
Durch den immer seltner
Die Sonne hindurchscheint,
Sind auch sie
Auserwählt
Für eine neue
Sintflut.

In the first section, people are using the continued existence of common birds to allay their unease about the future. Czechowski may well be taking up an idea from 'Gespräch mit dem Saurier', in which the survival of the clever sparrow contrasts with the obsolescence of the lumbering dinosaur (and hence also implies that clever

Homo sapiens will survive).⁸² In the second section, though, this belief is revealed to be an illusion, for a great disaster ('Sintflut') is looming, although people's habituation to dismal conditions blinds them to the portents. The image of the 'grey sky' is open enough to refer to the stagnation of the GDR as well as to the tense world political situation at the start of the 1980s or to the state of the global environment.

The Deluge is a frequent motif in German poetry on the end-of-the-world theme, e.g. Hans Magnus Enzensberger's 'weiterung' (1964) and Wolfgang Hilbig's 'das meer in sachsen' (1979).⁸³ Like both these poems, 'Die Vögel' envisages a catastrophe which is without survivors and thus without the hope of the biblical original. When the 'new Deluge' comes, there will be no Mount Ararat 'Als Insel im Meer/ Der Trostlosigkeit', and 'keiner/ Von dieser Spezies,/ Genannt Mensch' will be left to transmit or receive the message 'Überlebende keine'. What is more, the 'new Deluge' contradicts God's promise to Noah that the Flood would never be repeated (Gen. 9:15).

The cause of the flood is not indicated in 'Die Vögel', and this mythical symbol, which is intrinsically open, lacks any stated referent. This openness allows the gravity of the situation to be emphasised without having to specify well-known dangers, but it makes the disaster rather vague. Enzensberger and Hilbig, in contrast, avoid vagueness by relating the catastrophes in

'weiterung' and 'das meer in sachsen' to the consequences of progress.

As well as contradicting the hopefulness of the biblical Flood story, the total catastrophe in this poem also challenges the ultimate optimism of Brecht's 'An die Nachgeborenen'.⁸⁴ 'Die Vögel' concludes:

Die kommen werden nach uns,
vielleicht
Von fernen Gestirnen,
Werden nichts finden, außer,
Vielleicht,
Spatzen und Krähen.

Brecht's guarded confidence in the future is answered with a provocative pessimism: the only hope is that some of the more adaptable animals might *perhaps* survive, *perhaps* to be discovered by our extraterrestrial successors.

In his Frankfurt Lectures of 1981, Günter Kunert said of 'Die Vögel',

In seiner Folgerung ist dieses Gedicht ein Epitaph. Das Schlußwort in einem Prozeß gegen uns, das bereits verloren ist und in dem keine Revision mehr möglich scheint.⁸⁵

The poem undoubtedly lends itself to the absolute interpretation of this radical pessimist, but as literature, which Kunert himself in the preceding paragraphs even declares to be free from all outside ideological demands, it cannot be reduced to a single philosophical standpoint. Moreover, Czechowski's unspecific prediction of a catastrophe which is coming for unstated reasons lacks the exactness of legal proceedings which result in a specified punishment for a specified crime. Rather, this prophecy follows well-known present trends to their worst possible conclusion, the end of all life on earth, and veils the whole in the uncertainty of poetic imagery: the darkening sky, the flood, the visitors from another star. The poem is rather like Kunert's *Warngedichte* as interpreted by Marieluise de Waijer-Wilke, who says that Kunert retained the enlightening impetus of conveying insight even in the 1980s, when he came to define poetry as a Cassandra prophecy or a portent.⁸⁶ But while Kunert insists that the world is certain to end, e.g. in his 'flood' poem 'Vor der Sintflut',⁸⁷ Czechowski's prophecy in 'Die Vögel' can equally well be seen as a warning against complacent inertia, lest the vision of doom come true, as it can a prediction that disaster is inevitable.

The later poem 'Wir', in which humans are left isolated on earth after having wiped out the other

species, basically offers a simple variation on the disaster scenario of 'Die Vögel' and is similar in form and style, but there are significant differences which will be demonstrated here. Whereas 'Die Vögel' is vague about what it refers to, 'Wir' focusses clearly on ecological destruction as evidenced by the killing of species. The first two stanzas run:

Wir haben den Wolf erschlagen,
Den Bären, den Elch.
Wir vermissen sie nicht.
Wir haben uns daran gewöhnt.

Wir haben den Salamander vertrieben,
Den Molch und die Otter.
Wir vermissen sie nicht.
Wir haben uns daran gewöhnt.

These stanzas, together with the somewhat similar third one, make much more use of repetition and follow a much more regular pattern than the sections of 'Die Vögel'. Like Pietraß in the essay 'Vom Vergehen der Arten', Czechowski has with poetic means drawn up a list of vanished and vanishing species in order to bring the extent and cruelty of the destruction home to the reader.⁸⁸ In contrast to the catastrophe in 'Die Vögel',

these deaths are marked out as the responsibility of human beings, a point emphasised by the repetition of 'wir' and 'uns'.⁸⁹ Where this poem does agree with 'Die Vögel' and with 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet' is in Czechowski's concern about people's capacity to get used to a disturbed or violent, and hence dangerous, state of affairs.

The short section which begins the second half of the poem brings in the killing of people:

Im übrigen hat man den Menschen erschlagen.
Die die Toten zählten,
Haben sich daran gewöhnt.

Here the destruction of wildlife and man's brutality to man in the twentieth century are shown to be comparable phenomena to which, it is implied, people have grown similarly indifferent. The analogy is strengthened by the following line, 'Wir überlebten', which can refer both to the continued survival of humans on earth and to the position of Czechowski's generation as survivors of war and repression.

After the roll-call of the victims we read of the plight of the survivors:

Wir überlebten.
Doch wir vermissen schon bald

Nicht mehr, was wir überlebten.

Wie wird das sein,

Wenn wir unter uns sind:

Allein,

Namenlos,

Unbehaust,

Unbegraben.

The line 'Wir überlebten' may well also be another allusion to 'Gespräch mit dem Saurier', again pointing out that people's confidence in human survival is mistaken. In comparison with that in 'Die Vögel', the prophecy of the future in 'Wir' is more plainly expressed and does without ambiguous biblical imagery.⁹⁰ The clarity of expression in the poem helps to convey its central, enlightening message that egoistic indifference towards the fate of others - people, animals, plants - proves ultimately self-destructive. As in 'Die Vögel', though, it is left open to what extent the conjecture ('Wie wird das sein') is meant as a firm prediction of disaster. As a warning 'Wir' condemns suicidal complacency, but the apparent hopelessness of the poem suggests that a terrible future is probable.

For Pietraß as for Czechowski, species competition serves as an example of future dangers, e.g. in 'Die Schattenalge'.⁹¹ 'Die Überlebende' is, in addition, specially informed by the study of evolutionary biology which Pietraß undertook in order to write the essay 'Vom Vergehen der Arten' and which gave rise to several other poems in *Spielball*.⁹² An informative comparison can be made between the poem 'Die Überlebende' and the three-page section of this essay which is based on the same scientific facts about the extraordinary survival power of the rat.

The first two stanzas of the aptly titled poem 'Die Überlebende' indicate the rat's ability to survive even a nuclear explosion:

Wo die Bombe ihr Machtwort sprach
Das Leben letzte Schatten warf
Hat sie ihre niedrige Nische

Auf rosigen Zehen hingeduckt
Vom nagenden Magen ausgeschickt
Durchforscht sie den Meeresfriedhof

In 'Die Vögel' and 'Wir', Czechowski writes in a matter-of-fact style in order to confront the reader with the truth and to convey ideas. Although 'Die Überlebende' has a stronger factual basis, Pietraß here in contrast

uses more emotive language and images in a playful manner, stimulating the reader to realise the truth about familiar dangers by exercising his/her imagination. In the stanzas quoted above, the atomic bomb is vividly depicted as a demonic force, and its effects are movingly exemplified by the shadows (or 'shades') of people etched onto walls at Hiroshima and by the devastation of Pacific islands by nuclear tests. This depiction of the Bomb is juxtaposed with an image of the rat as a humble and rather cute creature, an impression reinforced by such correspondences of sound as the alliteration and assonance in 'niedrige Nische'. The unsettling incongruity of the rat in a context of nuclear devastation brings home the sinister, threatening nature of the rat's ability to survive, and the fact that only rats survived emphasises the destructive power of the Bomb. A metaphorical dimension of the poem can also just be seen in the first two stanzas: the rat is the type of the opportunist who goes to ground when there is trouble and who returns to thrive when conditions become more favourable. There are of course social as well as ecological 'niches'.

The essay contains a corresponding passage:

Jahre, nachdem die amerikanischen Atomversuche
Engebi und andere Inseln des Eniwetok-Atolls in eine

Hölle verwandelt hatten, jegliches Leben dort für immer erloschen schien und man einen Vorgeschmack dessen gehabt glaubte, wie die Welt enden könnte, betraten Biologen die verfluchte Ödnis. Sie trauten ihren Augen nicht: die Inseln wimmelten von Ratten. [...] Die unterirdischen Baue mußten einige der Ratten vor den direkten Einwirkungen der Explosionen geschützt haben. Dennoch, meinten die Biologen, sei dieses Überleben unheimlich. Werden Ratten die Erde erben? (p. 139)

Like the extract from the poem quoted above, this text is written in a vivid and witty style. The devastation wreaked by nuclear weapons is again described in emotive terms. There is, though, a fundamental difference in the way the meaning is communicated. The meaning of the verse text is conveyed through association-rich images and through plays on language, the implications of these having to be worked out by the reader. The meaning of the essayistic prose text, on the other hand, is stated directly and logically. With a less intense artistic treatment and without the compression of the poem, facts are cited in support of the stated thesis that the rat is a formidable rival to man, and the implications of these facts for a post-nuclear future are made explicit. Similar comparisons could be made between statements in the poem and the essay on, for example, the rat's

resistance to poisons and prolific reproduction.

In 'Die Überlebende', as in 'Vom Vergehen der Arten', the rat is man's ubiquitous rival:

Wo Sapiens in den Wettstreit tritt
Im indischen Reis in der Ewigen Stadt
Lenkt sie verborgene Ströme

In the poem the rat's powers of survival can for effect legitimately be represented as a mysterious invulnerability which even 'wise' *Homo sapiens* cannot overcome. This animal is even said to be 'vom Forscherstand/ Als *The fittest* anerkannt', as if scientists acknowledged the evolutionary superiority of the rat. This slanted, poetic style of representation is not available to the author in his scientific essay, but the large body of remarkable facts he cites is an equally effective means of showing the rat to be a formidable competitor to man: one example is that the rat population of Rome was estimated at 15,000,000 in 1976 (p. 141).

In the essay the close relationship between man and his 'shadow' the rat (p. 140) and the similarities between these two adaptable and widespread species (p. 141) undoubtedly hint gently that man too is a global pest. In the poem, however, the 'human' connotations of the rat motif extend beyond the ecological. The motif

probably represents the mysterious animal side of the human being which is manifest in the drives of hunger, sex, self-preservation and mass behaviour and which is often engaged in dangerous competition with human reason (here personified as 'Sapiens'), rather than cooperation with it. The rat can also serve specifically as a critical metaphor for human social climbers and opportunists, as the concluding stanza clearly shows:

Es sargen sie nicht Blei noch Stein
Sie beißt sich durch paßt sich ein
Mit spitzer Schnauze
Und lebenslang wachsenden Zähnen

In the context of 'Vom Vergehen der Arten', the example of the rat serves to demonstrate what happens when human activity wipes out the less adaptable species: a few species, maybe harmful to mankind, occupy the new niches and multiply without natural checks.⁹³ Seen as a whole, 'Vom Vergehen der Arten' uses facts and reasoning informed by deep commitment and executed with a witty clarity to warn of the accelerating extinction crisis and to plead for solidarity with animals and plants. With regard to a broader spectrum of issues, the volume *Spielball* conveys similar warnings and moral imperatives, not through direct argumentation but through a playful handling of - often ambiguous - images and language. In

the context of that book, the rat in 'Die Überlebende' is again the exceptional animal that flourishes in the altered world while others perish,⁹⁴ an indicator of the dark side of progress. The rat motif in the poem does, though, have further senses, undeveloped in the essay, beyond global problems and scientific topics. To sum up, this essay and this poem agree in their fundamental intention to warn and activate, but different means are used to realise it, basically rational and non-rational respectively.

Like the Flood and other future motifs, the motif of dangerous competition between man and other species has the advantage of openness, which can provoke a productive diversity of thoughts on the reader's part. 'Die Vögel' and 'Wir', for example, can be seen either as a precautionary warning (like 'Die Überlebende') or as a despairing prediction. Czechowski's prophecies of a worsening future also hint at the emptiness of the promises of socialism and progress. 'Die Vögel', 'Wir' and 'Die Überlebende' can even be read in a transferred sense as general criticisms of selfish and complacent behaviour. The nebulosity of the flood image in 'Die Vögel', though, shows the danger of too much indeterminacy in what is still poetry with a socially critical message. However, the openness of these poems is

tempered by their factual element and by their 'sober, critical diction', to apply Schuhmann's words⁹⁵ (even the language of 'Die Überlebende' with its emotive touches may fairly be described thus).

6. Reception

In section 9 of the previous chapter we saw that most GDR reviewers in the 1980s showed only a limited acceptance of narrative prose writers' critiques of progress, while some expressed opposition. A satisfactory discussion of environmental prose was not achieved until 1987-89. This section will investigate how the critical reception of environmental poetry developed in the GDR in the Eighties and will, in conclusion, determine whether there are significant differences between this and the reception of prose works. In this section we shall look at the changing critical and scholarly responses to the works of Wulf Kirsten, Heinz Czechowski and Richard Pietraß respectively.

As a starting-point for our study we may take Ursula Heukenkamp's review of Wulf Kirsten's volume *der bleibaum*, published in *Weimarer Beiträge* in 1978 (the

comparable review by Jürgen Engler could have served the same purpose).⁹⁶ Heukenkamp's main interest is in the way that Kirsten has taken language as the subject of his poems, but, following on from this, substantial attention is also paid to the environmental topics in his work. The reviewer highlights the tension, as pointed out by Kirsten's poems, between traditional language and a changed reality, between 'die schöne Natur der poetischen Überlieferung' and the contaminated relic of nature that the apple tree in the poem 'der bleibaum' has become (p. 133). 'werktätig' and 'dorf' are shown to make similar points with regard to the disappearance of traditional rural activities, landscape and language. But after quoting the last few lines of 'dorf', Heukenkamp comments:

Dies ist sicher nicht die Sichtweise eines Dorfbewohners. Aber die Frage nach dem Verlust, den der große Gewinn des Fortschritts auf dem Lande einbringt, kann nicht ausbleiben zu einer Zeit, wo dieser selbst unumstritten und über seine Notwendigkeit längst entschieden ist. [...] Es lohnt also, darauf aufmerksam zu machen, daß der direkte Nutzen gegen andere Bedürfnisse der Menschen abzuwägen ist und wir jetzt zu entscheiden haben, wieviel nicht nur an Landschaft, sondern auch an Tradition wir erhalten wollen. (p. 134)

In comparison with the tendentious claim of the poem that progress has caused nothing but loss, Heukenkamp's conclusion is tame: a qualified, cautiously phrased questioning of society's priorities, expressed in the balanced terms of gain and loss. In the first sentence quoted above, she implies that Kirsten's viewpoint is overly subjective and thus distances herself somewhat from his position. Heukenkamp's main intention, though, is probably to justify Kirsten's potentially controversial criticism of the destruction wreaked by progress; she does this by generally playing down the radicality of his message.

However, when Klaus Schuhmann writes about 'dorf' several years later in his 1986 survey of ecological poems in *DDR-Literatur '85 im Gespräch*, he feels no need for qualifications like those made by Heukenkamp; compare Schuhmann's comment below with the first sentence by Heukenkamp quoted above:

Die Dorfbewohner haben - so muß wohl geschlußfolgert werden - die allmähliche Zerstörung ihrer natürlichen Umwelt selbst ins Werk gesetzt.⁹⁷

By putting the blame on ordinary people, though, Schuhmann does avoid the political dimension, which is brought up by, for example, the Western scholar Wolfgang Ertl when he sees in 'dorf' 'eine kritische Reflexion auf

die Gesellschaft, die solche lieblose Verwüstung der Landschaft herbeiführt' (1982).⁹⁸ If, besides Schuhmann's study, one further takes into account Heinz Czechowski's interpretation of the poem 'lebensspuren' (*neue deutsche literatur*, 1984), which deals movingly with the decline of the traditional village,⁹⁹ Bernd Leistner's 'Laudatio' for Wulf Kirsten (*neue deutsche literatur*, 1985), which emphasises the 'von Erschütterung kündende Klage' contained in 'dorf',¹⁰⁰ and Eberhard Haufe's 1986 afterword to *die erde bei Meißen* (see below), one must conclude that in 1984-86 Kirsten's environmental poems were already receiving a thorough, sympathetic and unreserved appreciation in the GDR, albeit in relatively out-of-the-way literary publications.

However, the critical reception of *die erde bei Meißen* (1986) seems mostly to be confined to newspapers and appears largely to ignore the important environmental dimension. In Bernd Heimberger's review in *Tribüne* (1986), for example, the quality of Kirsten's artistry is praised and the importance of village themes for this poet is pointed out, but the environmental poems are completely disregarded.¹⁰¹ The exception is Eberhard Haufe's afterword in the book itself, which includes, *inter alia*, a fuller account of the environmental topics in Kirsten's poetry than is given by any previous

critical work.¹⁰² Haufe sympathetically traces the change from Kirsten's enthusiasm for technological progress in the Sixties to his awareness of its darker sides in the Seventies. When discussing Kirsten's 'unsparing, sarcastic and finally angry' writing about the destruction of the traditional village and landscape, Haufe justifies this in similar terms to those used by Heukenkamp, though without her note of criticism:

Jeder Fortschritt hat auch seine Verlustseite. Dies ins Bewußtsein zu bringen und gleichzeitig zur Rettung des vielleicht noch Rettbaren beizutragen, [...] das ist eine legitime Aufgabe von Dichtung, die wirklich Gegenwartsdichtung ist, nicht anders wie einer Gesellschaft, der es um den Menschen geht. [i.e. socialist society] (p. 129)

The apologetic tone is, in contrast, characteristically absent from Heinz Czechowski's 'Laudatio' for Kirsten (*Sinn und Form*, 1989), where Kirsten's criticisms of progress are again touched upon.¹⁰³

The reception of Wulf Kirsten's environmental poetry in the late 1970s was broadly sympathetic but his critical message was as yet only partly acknowledged. A fuller appreciation of this message developed in the period 1984-89, although the reviews of *die erde bei Meißen* in 1986 were silent on the environmental topic.

This testifies to the frequently low quality of routine literary criticism in the GDR, and perhaps to a desire to avoid controversial topics. There is probably no connection with the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in April of that year, which in fact led to an intensification rather than a suppression of environmental debate.¹⁰⁴

The East German reception in the 1980s of environmental themes in Heinz Czechowski's poetry follows a similar pattern to that seen above. From the earlier phase of this reception, Ursula Heukenkamp's criticism of *Was mich betrifft* in *Weimarer Beiträge* (1983) displays the same caution that we saw in her review of *der bleibaum*.¹⁰⁵ Heukenkamp gives a detailed analysis of the tension in Czechowski's work between present reality and (former) expectations of the future, and of the poet's consequent sadness and turning to the past. Her comments on the specific subject of the environment, though, are rather general:

Daß die Gedichte zum Thema Umwelterfahrungen im engeren Sinne allesamt warnenden Ernst vorweisen, ist nur selbstverständlich. Wer, wenn nicht die Dichter, sollte unsere Aufmerksamkeit dafür einnehmen! (p. 1106)

No specific mention is made of such important environmental poems as 'Abendblatt', 'Diät' and 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet',¹⁰⁶ but something of the method and intention of poems like these is captured in Heukenkamp's general judgements: 'Mehr als zuvor bezieht der Autor das unmittelbare Erlebnis auf sein allgegenwärtiges Bewußtsein der Gefährdung unserer Welt' (p. 1106); 'Czechowski ist nicht der einzige, der inzwischen die Ablenkung von den großen Fragen unserer Zeit ablehnt' (p. 1107).

Klaus Schuhmann's quotation of 'Diät' in his survey of 1986 is a sign of a more specific critical interest in Czechowski's environmental poetry.¹⁰⁷ This interest can also be seen in Christel and Walfried Hartinger's article on Czechowski in *Literatur der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (1987), where, for example, the poet's concern in 'Abendblatt' about the price of progress is discussed.¹⁰⁸

However, the strong environmental theme in *Kein näheres Zeichen* (1987), which can be seen in such poems as 'Kritisches Bewußtsein', 'Wir' and 'Spaziergang',¹⁰⁹ receives only patchy recognition in the reviews of the book. In *DDR-Literatur '87 im Gespräch* (1988), Bernd Leistner interprets the poem 'Kritisches Bewußtsein' figuratively as an 'Erfahrungslandschaft [...] "ohne Innen und ohne Morgen"' and as a 'Vaterlandsklage', but he ignores the literal, environmentally critical

significance of the shabby landscape depicted in the poem.¹¹⁰ Andreas Lehmann in *Tribüne* (1988) is exceptional in pointing out the apocalyptic warning signs in poems like 'Wir'.¹¹¹ It is, though, Ursula Heukenkamp who gives the fullest account of Czechowski's treatment of environmental and global problems; this is in a *Weimarer Beiträge* article of 1988 which addresses a number of themes in Czechowski's poetic works up to and including the volume *Kein näheres Zeichen*.¹¹² Heukenkamp now refers specifically to the poems 'Diät', 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet' and 'Abendblatt' from *Was mich betrifft*, which she failed to mention in her 1983 review of that book, and explains more precisely than before how Czechowski opposes people's disregard for the great problems which endanger them:

Hier [in the poem 'Abendblatt'] schafft sich eine Verbitterung über die unabänderliche Selbstbezogenheit der Lebenswelt Ausdruck, die es früher nicht gab. Czechowski hatte immer Sympathie für das 'Alltägliche im Täglichen'. Die Satiren stehen gleichsam im Widerspruch zu ihm, wenn sie zornig konstatieren, daß das Alltagsleben die Gefahren, die es doch bedrohen, Tag für Tag aufs Neue ignoriert. (p. 829)

Heukenkamp does, though, express her disagreement with the helplessness before the facts that she finds in Czechowski's poems: 'Mehr an Handlungsbereitschaft und Überwindung von Ohnmacht und Schwäche, als die Perspektive der Texte voraussetzt, wird gegenwärtig sichtbar' (p. 834). This statement very probably refers to contemporary reforms in the Soviet Union and international initiatives by Gorbachev.

The environmentally critical poems contained in *Was mich betrifft* received a sympathetic but limited reception in 1983, like that given to the equivalent poems in *der bleibbaum* five to six years before. In the period 1986-89 several literary scholars came to devote closer attention to the environmental themes in Czechowski's poetry, although the majority of reviews of *Kein näheres Zeichen* ignored this important aspect, as was also the case with *die erde bei Meissen*.

The reception of Pietraß's work in the 1980s again shows a similar development, starting with the limited appreciation of the environmental poems in *Freiheitsmuseum* (1982). The only reviewer of the book to remark on these is Peter Böthig in *Weimarer Beiträge* (1984), who notes at one point that although Pietraß is deeply affected by the conflicts of our time:

Ein Ausweichen in die Idylle, eine Rückkehr in die Natur sind für Pietraß nirgends möglich [...]. Das Bewußtsein des Verlustes der Utopie der schönen Natur bricht immer wieder durch und bestimmt die Bildwelt in den Naturgedichten: Umweltschäden und verschmutzte Natur in *Freies Feld* (S. 60) und *Hohe Mulde* (S. 61), oder in *Der Ringende* (S. 37).¹¹³

A more detailed analysis is undertaken by Jürgen Engler in his interpretation of 'Der Ringende' in *neue deutsche Literatur* (1983).¹¹⁴ Besides Pietraß's rhyming technique, Engler discusses the aim of the poem, to promote environmental awareness, and the use of association-rich mythological and apocalyptic imagery. The critic does, though, draw politically tendentious conclusions from 'Der Ringende' without any obvious basis for these in the poem itself:

Der Baum, dessen Leben von den Abgasen des Verkehrs gefährdet wird, steht, pars pro toto, für die Natur. Ihre Existenz wird von der menschlichen Zivilisation bedroht, insofern diese sich - global gesehen - 'naturwüchsig', also ohne umfassende und menschlichen Bedürfnissen verpflichtete Planung entfaltet. Das heißt mit anderen Worten: Kapitalistisches Profitdenken und imperialistische Machtpolitik in allen ihren Erscheinungsformen sind die Haupt-

verursacher ökologischer Gefährdung des Planeten.
(p. 111)

As in the case of Heukenkamp's interpretation of 'dorf', the purpose of this highly biased reading is presumably to justify a literary work which makes potentially controversial criticisms of the destructiveness of progress.

The inclusion of 'Die Schattentalge' in Klaus Schuhmann's survey of 1986¹¹⁵ marks the beginning of a more intense phase of reception of Pietraß's environmental verse, which reaches its height in the controversy around *Spielball* (published 1987). In the 'Für und Wider' debate of 1988 in *Weimarer Beiträge*, Ursula Heukenkamp remarks, 'Der Anlaß für dieses "Für und Wider" ist schon an sich bemerkenswert: Ein Gedichtband wird zum Gegenstand nicht der Interpretation, sondern der Meinungsäußerung.' She points out that whereas recent GDR poetry has tended towards obscurity, *Spielball* deals with topics which form part of everyday awareness.¹¹⁶ An ordinary newspaper review like that of Bernd Heimberger in *Neue Zeit* (1987) may entirely disregard the main theme of *Spielball*, the global problems,¹¹⁷ but this important aspect is discussed thoroughly by Jürgen Engler in *neue deutsche literatur* (1987), by Barbara Köhler in *Sonntag* (1987)¹¹⁸ and by the contributors to the 'Für und Wider'

discussion in *Weimarer Beiträge* (1988). The most serious criticisms of *Spielball* are made in *Weimarer Beiträge*: out of the six original contributions, three are favourable towards the book, one is unfavourable and two present mixed judgements. Here I shall summarise the arguments of Harry Riedel and Rudolf Dau from the original 'Für und Wider' as representing typical positive and negative opinions respectively, and then the main points made by Bernd Leistner in a later article rebutting Dau.¹¹⁹

Riedel sees a deeper meaning behind Pietraß's 'play' and identifies the central theme as 'das Subjekt in seiner Umwelt oder auch unser aller Umwelt' (p. 108). As this critic sees it, Pietraß relies heavily upon 'die mahnende, aufmerkend machende Art des Warngedichts', which could have proved tiring were it not for the elaborate, associative, playful structures of Pietraß's warning poems (p. 109). (All six original contributors to the 'Für und Wider' debate have some point of criticism to make about the repetitiveness or pessimism of these poems.) Riedel further appreciates the high intellectual level of Pietraß's poems, which address new, complicated questions and undertake 'new thinking' in view of these problems (p. 110 - this concept of 'new thinking' is of course associated particularly with Gorbachev). Play, as seen in the poem 'Spielball', is in fact of existential importance:

Das Spiel, das immer wieder Schöpferisches erzeugt, fordert heute nicht nur die einzelne Maßnahme, sondern die Ausdehnung des Schöpferischen auf die Erhaltung der Welt. Ohne diese Dimension gerät das im einzelnen zur einzelnen Erfindung führende Kreativ-Schöpferische unter Umständen ins Gegenteil, in ihrer Summe zur Vernichtung der Menschheit. (p. 111)

While Riedel gives a favourable assessment of Pietraß's achievements, Dau is ambivalent, when not antagonistic. In his opinion, Pietraß represents *both* 'die nach wie vor nicht abreiende Tradition der DDR-Lyrik, sich Fragen von menschheitsgeschichtlicher Bedeutung zu stellen' and 'die international verbreitete Tendenz, den wissenschaftlich-technischen Fortschritt und die politischen Konstellationen in der Welt von heute mit tiefer Skepsis zu beobachten' (p. 92). Dau sees the 'playful' factor in Pietraß's work as an attempt to counter the hopelessness of the world depicted in his poems with the humanistic hope offered by his artistry, especially his mastery of form. In some cases, though, it happens that 'das Streben nach heiterer Souveränitt umschlägt (oder doch umzuschlagen droht) in die Ästhetisierung des Schreckens, des Bösen und des Häßlichen' (p. 94). Dau furthermore accuses Pietraß of looking down on the earthly bustle from a lofty vantage-

point and stops just short of calling him a representative of 'higher cynicism' (p. 94). Although Dau does welcome Pietraß's attempt to face the great questions, his aesthetic and ideological criticism of the way the poet does this effectively disqualifies much of what Pietraß is saying.

In his 'polemic' against Dau, Bernd Leistner vigorously defends Pietraß against the charge of looking or talking down and states,

Und wenn etliche Texte als menschheitliche 'Warngedichte' gelesen werden können, so sind auch sie die Verse nicht eines teilhabelos orakelnden Türmers, sondern eines schmerzlich Betroffenen, welcher Beobachtungen, Wahrnehmungen, Informationen verarbeitet, die Lebens- und Weltsorge aufkommen lassen [...] (p. 1215)

In Leistner's opinion, the 'cynicism' is to be found on Dau's side (p. 1215). Interpreting Pietraß's 'playful behaviour' in a more straightforward way than Dau, Leistner understands it to be this poet's 'Aktivitätschance', 'seine Möglichkeit tapfer-menschlichen Gegenwirkens gegen die Zwänge und Vorgänge, die das Subjekt herabwürdigen, es einkreisen, das Netz dichter weben' (p. 1215).

The reception of Richard Pietraß's environmental poems in the 1980s follows essentially the same pattern as seen in the cases of Kirsten and Czechowski: in 1983-84 his ecological criticism was recognised only to a limited extent or in officially acceptable terms, but in 1986-89 his broadened and intensified concern about environmental and other global problems received a full recognition¹²⁰ and even stirred up controversy. The dispute around *Spielball*, which was an unusual response to a book of poetry, may well be attributable to the overwhelming emphasis that Pietraß laid on the above issues and to the fact that he was a relatively young poet without the established status of older writers like Czechowski and Kirsten, whose critical poems were universally treated with respect by reviewers and literary scholars.

In the period 1977-84, poets' environmental criticisms were accepted by literary critics only within limits. Kirsten's angry condemnation of the effects of progress in 'dorf' (*der bleibaum*, 1977) was in 1978 reduced by Heukenkamp to the question of how much loss this necessary process should be allowed to cause. The environmental poems in Czechowski's *Was mich betrifft* (1981) and Pietraß's *Freiheitsmuseum* (1982) were received in rather general terms, or with a political slant in the case of Engler's interpretation of 'Der Ringende' by

Pietraß. The limited reception of these works resembles that given to *Der Kirschbaum*, Juri Koch's *Novelle* of 1984, but without the dogmatic opposition that *Der Kirschbaum* encountered. A more thorough and less guarded phase of reception commenced in 1984-86, with the latter year seeing the publication of Schuhmann's study of GDR ecological poems and Haufe's afterword to *die erde bei Meissen*. This phase of reception continued in 1987-89, when environmental themes in Pietraß's *Spielball* (1987), Czechowski's *Kein näheres Zeichen* (1987) and earlier volumes by these poets were discussed in depth. Like *Die Totenkeule*, Matthias Körner's novel of 1988, *Spielball* was criticised on ideological grounds over the view of progress it presented; the advocates of *Spielball*, however, were frank in their support for Pietraß's message, whereas the supporters of *Die Totenkeule* adopted a defensive attitude.¹²¹

The more open and favourable reception of environmentally critical verse, compared with that of prose, may be because poems were viewed by critics in the GDR as less challenging to official values, since they had a smaller readership than prose, were more subjective in nature and lacked the investigative function of prose. The relatively unthreatening character of poetry may also be the reason why the critics began to accept the more radical aspects of environmental verse in 1984-86, before

they started to agree with similar aspects of prose in 1987-89.

7. Evaluation of the poetic approach

The texts analysed in this chapter confirm the two basic propositions which I derived from Schuhmann's findings and which were stated at the beginning of the chapter: firstly that environmental lyric poetry uses signs which point to an aspect of reality greater than themselves, and secondly that these signs and poems appeal to the reader on the subjective level. On the first proposition, all of the poems studied above present selected points from some aspect of the world rather than the more comprehensive view of such an aspect offered in their different ways by *Die Totenkeule*, *Der Kirschbaum* and *Respektloser Umgang*. On the second proposition, the poems present images/signs and ideas which invite a personal interpretation and response, whereas the narrative and essayistic prose texts give analyses which call for objective reflection on the way things are, although *Respektloser Umgang* and *Der Kirschbaum* also communicate on a subjective level to some extent.

Schuhmann's fundamental distinction between ecological poems and prose works, however, requires

differentiation. Just as *Der Kirschbaum* and *Respektloser Umgang* share typically poetic characteristics, so some of the poems analysed in this chapter ('Landschaftsschutzgebiet', 'dorf', 'Im Seekreis') display features which Schuhmann ascribes to prose: these poems depict the social context of environmental damage and by that means undertake research into the causes of the destruction and assign blame. In the poems the social context is, though, depicted in a more selective manner and simpler conclusions are drawn than in the prose texts; this is only appropriate, for the main function of the poems is pointing-out rather than explanation, which is a task largely taken on by narrative and essayistic prose in GDR environmental literature.

Schuhmann's statements that the majority of GDR ecological poems are characterised by 'ihre nüchtern-kritische Diktion' and confine themselves to 'die Mitteilung jener Sachverhalte, die offengelegt werden sollen'¹²² are true as broad generalisations, as can be seen for example from Czechowski's 'Im Seekreis', Kirsten's 'ödland' and Pietraß's 'Die Überlebende'. There are, though, many exceptions, in whole or in part. The generally sober and factual poem 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet' develops into an emotional outburst at one, central point, while 'verlandendes torfloch' is consistently emotive in its diction and gives relatively

low prominence to the ecological 'facts of the case', which are overlaid by feelings and coexist with equally important metaphorical dimensions of the poem. Further exceptions to the factuality of environmental poetry are the nightmarish (and hardly 'sober') vision in the latter part of 'dorf' and the imagined futures, soberly expressed, in 'Die Vögel' and 'Wir'.

As we saw from the example of *Respektloser Umgang*, a new way of being in the world can very well be expressed through a new way of writing. While Königsdorf's radical subjectivity and disparate narrative structure in that work help to express the personal situation of the individual in an endangered world, Pietraß's different means perform a different task: formal compactness and playful treatment of forms and language allow an awareness (personal or general) of global dangers to be communicated in a fresh way which avoids the stereotyped features of official and technical discourse. The 'disparate' approach of Königsdorf and the 'playful' approach of Pietraß do, however, both enable the reader creatively to make connections between different aspects of reality and to gain insights.

Contemporary issues can, though, still be addressed effectively through more established poetic forms. The free verse favoured by Czechowski and Kirsten lends a special weight to the content of the lines and is highly flexible: it is thus suitable for giving prominence to

the writer's own thoughts and feelings, whatever these may be (e.g. anger and accusation in 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet', resignation and/or warning in 'Die Vögel'). Kirsten's 'verlandendes torfloch' and Lorenc's 'Dorfbegräbnis' prove that more regular and traditional verse forms than this too can accommodate a new consciousness. It is true that the traditional language and verse structure of 'Dorfbegräbnis' reflect the old way of life whose loss is being mourned in the poem, but Lorenc's expression of conservationist sentiment in the face of a historically new type of destruction is innovative, and especially so in the GDR context. The language and structure of 'verlandendes torfloch' mirror the new beauty of the new, degraded landscape rather than that of the old. It is significant that neither 'Dorfbegräbnis' nor 'verlandendes torfloch' strictly adheres to a traditional form; both poems contain substantial innovations. Like Körner's novel *Die Totenkeule*, these are flexible and hence successful adaptations of older forms.

As well as a rethinking of older literary forms, the new consciousness occasioned by - among other things - environmental problems has also led to a reassessment of traditional poetic topoi. The beauty of nature, the harmony of man and nature, the equilibrium of man-made and natural things, the organic integrity of individual

and community life are shown to have regrettably been destroyed in reality by the modern world ('Dorfbegräbnis', 'Eiche', 'dorf', 'verlandendes torfloch', 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet'). These poems, while facing up to present reality, have a justifiable tendency to look back at the good things that have been lost (and hence also implicitly to appeal for the preservation of what survives). The above topoi which have been shown in a new light as damaged or invalidated are not the only poetic motifs to have acquired a fresh, 'environmental' significance. We have seen how the Flood, which is really a generally applicable symbol of catastrophe, and the extinction of species, originally used in poems about nuclear war, have also come to signify ecological disaster. The motif of non-functional nature has retained its metaphorical meaning - the worth of the individual - but a new, strong emphasis has also been placed on its literal sense, the value of wild things and places.

The role of lyric poetry in the GDR environmental debate was slightly less important than that of narrative prose but still significant. Owing to its limited explanatory power and small readership, poetry did not take on the role of 'Ersatzöffentlichkeit' as narrative prose did, nor was ecologically critical poetry as widely discussed in the ordinary press as environmental prose works were. Poetry does, though, seem to have received

just as much attention as prose in literary journals and scholarly works, and this reception was throughout the 1980s more advanced in its development than that of prose and more sympathetic towards the writers' positions. As was suggested in the conclusion to the preceding section, it may have been possible to discuss environmental poetry more frankly than prose because poems with their limited readership, personal nature and lack of a journalistic function posed less of a challenge to official values.

As far as the content of the poems themselves is concerned, the gradual radicalisation of writers' environmentalist views, which we observed in the essays and narrative prose of the Seventies and Eighties, can also be seen if one compares Pietraß's *Notausgang* (1980), *Freiheitsmuseum* (1982) and *Spielball* (1987). A comparison between Kirsten's *der bleibaum* (1977) and *die erde bei Meißen* (1986) or between Czechowski's *Was mich betrifft* (1981) and *Kein näheres Zeichen* (1987) shows that these older poets had already gone further in their development than Pietraß and the prose writers. Kirsten and Czechowski were already making radical criticisms of progress and the state of the environment in *der bleibaum* and *Was mich betrifft*, thus anticipating the developments in prose in 1981-84 (Hanns Cibulka's *Swantow*, Christa Wolf's *Kassandra*, Jurij Koch's *Der Kirschbaum* etc.). Later environmental poems by Czechowski and Kirsten

continued to show the same degree of radicalism. *die Erde bei Meissen*, *Was mich betrifft* and *Kein näheres Zeichen* also displayed pessimistic and satirical tendencies which were strong in ecological poetry from the late Seventies onwards but which only appeared to a lesser extent in the East German environmental prose of the Eighties (e.g. in Wolf's *Störfall* of 1987). Here we see the special sensitivity of poetry to changes in public consciousness, and its relative freedom from political constraints in the GDR.

Notes to chapter 4

1. Klaus Schuhmann, 'Lageberichte zur ökologischen Situation - Beobachtungen zur Lyrik der achtziger Jahre', in *DDR-Literatur '85 im Gespräch*, edited by Siegfried Rönisch (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1986), pp. 23-43 (p. 42).
2. Schuhmann, 'Lageberichte ...', p. 41.
3. Schuhmann, 'Lageberichte ...', pp. 34-35. Volker Braun, 'Material V: Burghammer', 'Material VI: Die Mummelfälle', *Langsamer knirschender Morgen: Gedichte* (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1987), pp. 33-36, 37-38.
4. Heinz Czechowski, 'Diät', *Was mich betrifft*:

Gedichte (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1981), p. 75. Wulf Kirsten, 'dorf', *der bleibaum: Gedichte* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1977), p. 66-67. Richard Pietraß, 'Die Schattenalge', *Spielball: Gedichte* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1987), p. 9.

5. Schuhmann, 'Lageberichte ...', p. 42.
6. E.g. Christine Cosentino and Wolfgang Ertl, *Zur Lyrik Volker Brauns*, *Hochschulschriften Literaturwissenschaft*, 59 (Königstein/Ts.: Forum Academicum, 1984). Ursula Heukenkamp, 'Überantwortete Sinngebung: Volker Brauns "Material I: Wie herrlich leuchtet mir die Natur"', *Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, 3 (1988) 2, pp. 173-88. Klaus Schuhmann, 'Volker Brauns Lyrik der siebziger und achtziger Jahre im Spiegel der Gedichtgruppe "Der Stoff zum Leben"', in *DDR-Lyrik im Kontext*, edited by Christine Cosentino, Wolfgang Ertl and Gerd Labrousse, *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik*, 26 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988), pp. 237-72. Gisela Shaw, 'Die Landschaftsmetapher bei Volker Braun', *GDR Monitor*, no. 16 (Winter 1986/87), pp. 105-140. Arrigo Subiotto, 'Die Entwicklung eines Dichters: Zu Volker Brauns neuester Lyrik', in *Ein Moment des erfahrenen Lebens: Zur Lyrik der DDR*, edited by John L. Flood, *GDR Monitor Special Series*, 5 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987), pp. 140-61.
7. Georg Maurer, 'Veränderte Landschaft', in *Veränderte*

Landschaft: Gedichte, edited by Wulf Kirsten (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1979), p. 5. Previously published in Maurer's volume *Selbstbildnis* (1956).

8. Czechowski, 'Erfahrungen mit Karpfen', *Schafe und Sterne: Gedichte* (Halle/Saale: mdv, 1974), pp. 79-82. Czechowski, 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet', *Was mich betrifft*, pp. 76-77. Czechowski, 'Industrieviertel P.', *Mein Venedig: Gedichte und andere Prosa* (Berlin: Klaus Wagenbach, 1989), pp. 86-88. Kirsten, 'verlandendes torfloch', *die erde bei Meißen: gedichte* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1986), pp. 101-02. Matthias Körner, *Die Totenkeule: Roman* (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1988), pp. 194-99. The poem dates given in the text will generally refer to the first known publication of the poems in book form. Dates of writing will also be cited if available.
9. Kirsten, 'ödland', *die erde bei Meißen*, p. 110. Günter Kunert, 'Natur II', *Unterwegs nach Utopia: Gedichte* (Munich and Vienna: Hanser, 1977), p. 50. Pietraß, 'Durch die Blume', *Spielball*, p. 18.
10. Czechowski, 'Im Seekreis', *Was mich betrifft*, pp. 12-13. Kirsten, 'dorf', *der bleibaum*, pp. 66-67. Kito Lorenc, 'Dorfbegräbnis', *Wortland: Gedichte* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1984), p. 50. Pietraß, 'Eiche', in 'Weichbild', *ndl*, 35 (1987) 8, pp. 54-57 (p. 54).
11. Czechowski, 'Die Vögel', in *Jahrbuch für Lyrik* 3,

- edited by Günter Kunert (Königstein/Ts.: Athenäum, 1981), pp. 31-32. Czechowski, 'Wir', *Kein näheres Zeichen: Gedichte* (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1987), p. 135. Pietraß, 'Die Überlebende', *Spielball*, p. 12. Pietraß, 'Vom Vergehen der Arten', in *Windvogelviereck: Schriftsteller über Wissenschaften und Wissenschaftler*, edited by John Erpenbeck (Berlin: Der Morgen, 1987), pp. 128-43 (pp. 139-41).
12. Wulf Kirsten, 'Entwurf einer Landschaft,' in *satzanfang: gedichte* (Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau, 1970), pp. 93-6. Koch speaks similarly: '[...] ich nehme die Region für die Welt, den Ausschnitt fürs Ganze, die Zelle für den Organismus, und oft vermag ich in der Lausitz größere Zusammenhänge der Dinge dieser Welt zu erkennen als an berühmten geographischen Punkten der Erde.' Klaus Hammer, 'Die Kirschbaumkrone im Waldteich: Gespräch mit Jurij Koch über seine neue Novelle', *Sonntag*, 39 (1985) 2, p. 4.
13. See Kirsten, 'Landschaft mit Schweifkuppeln', *ndl*, 37 (1989) 8, pp. 48-57; 'getrübter himmel', *ndl*, 39 (1991) 10, pp. 43-47; and 'denkst du ja, denk ich nein', *ndl*, 40 (1992) 7, pp. 34-36.
14. Kirsten, *satzanfang*, pp. 95-96.
15. Ursula Heukenkamp, 'Interview mit Heinz Czechowski,' *WB*, 34 (1988) 5, pp. 808-24 (p. 819).
16. See Nicolai Riedel, *Internationale Günter Kunert*

Bibliographie 1, Bibliographien zur deutschen Literatur, 5 (Hildesheim, Zurich, New York: G. Olms, 1987).

17. Christel and Walfried Hartinger, 'Heinz Czechowski,' in *Literatur der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik: Einzeldarstellungen*, edited by Hans Jürgen Geerds and Hannelore Prosche (Berlin: Volk und Wissen, 1987), vol. III, pp. 15-38 (p. 34).
18. There is, though, a mention of the endangered status of the blue whale in the appended notes. Pietraß, *Notausgang: Gedichte* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1980), p. 87.
19. Pietraß, 'Der Ringende', *Freiheitsmuseum: Gedichte* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1987), p. 37.
20. Ursula Heukenkamp, 'Preußenkind in Sachsen, Sachsenzunge in der Mark: Gespräch mit Richard Pietraß', in *Weltkind: Gedichte*, Pietraß (Leipzig: Reclam, 1990), pp. 94-103 (p. 99).
21. Anna Chiarloni, 'Richard Pietraß' *Spielball*', *Connaissance de la RDA*, no. 24, pp. 17-27 (p. 22).
22. Harald Hartung, 'Neuere Naturlyrik in der DDR', in *Naturlyrik und Gesellschaft*, edited by Norbert Mecklenburg (Stuttgart: Klett, 1977), pp. 179-97 (p. 186).
23. Czechowski, 'Wasserfahrt', *Wasserfahrt: Gedichte* (Halle-Saale: mdv, 1968), pp. 106-08; 'Flußfahrt',

Schafe und Sterne, pp. 129-31; 'Diät', *Was mich betrifft*, p. 75; 'Auf den Plätzen am Fluß', *Kein näheres Zeichen*, pp. 77-78.

24. Karl Mickel, 'Der See', in *Die eigene Stimme: Lyrik der DDR*, edited by Ursula Heukenkamp, Heinz Kahlau and Wulf Kirsten (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1988), p. 202. For a 'green' twist to the lake motif, compare man's inability to perform the same feat in Thomas Rosenlöcher's revision of that poem, 'Die Entleerung', *Ich lag im Garten bei Kleinzschachwitz: Gedichte & zwei Notate* (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1982), p. 41.
25. Sarah Kirsch, 'Schöner See Wasseraug', *Landaufenthalt: Gedichte* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1967), p. 37.
26. Czechowski, 'Vers ohne Lösung', *Ich, beispielsweise: Gedichte* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1982), p. 11. Originally published in *Nachmittag eines Liebespaares* (Halle-Saale: mdv, 1962).
27. Peter Huchel, 'Der Knabenteich', *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. I, *Die Gedichte*, edited by Axel Vieregge (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), pp. 59-60.
28. Other examples are Czechowski, 'Spaziergang', *Kein näheres Zeichen*, p. 159, and Pietraß, 'Die Kippe', *Weltkind: Gedichte* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1990), p. 8.
29. Czechowski, 'Peripherie', *Wasserfahrt*, p. 52.
30. Rosenlöcher debunks the element of male, human

arrogance here in the poem 'Rückfall', *Ich lag im Garten bei Kleinzschachwitz*, p. 42.

31. Nikolaus Lenau, 'Schilflieder', in *Sämtliche Werke, Briefe*, edited by Hermann Engelhard (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta, 1959), pp. 19-21 (specific quotations on p. 19).
32. E.g. Czechowski, 'Spaziergang', *Kein näheres Zeichen*, p. 159; Braun, 'Material VI: Die Mummelfälle', *Langsamer knirschender Morgen*, pp. 37-38; Kirsten, 'veilchenzeit', in 'Landschaft mit Schweifkuppeln', *ndI*, 37 (1989) 8, pp. 54-55 (the three poems above all make use of water imagery); Pietraß, 'Freies Feld', *Freiheitsmuseum*, p. 60.
33. For a discussion of this tradition in German poetry, see Ursula Heukenkamp, *Die Sprache der schönen Natur* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1984).
34. International agreements since 1974 to preserve fish stocks and set quotas and the introduction of restrictive fishery protection boundaries in the Atlantic, North Sea and Baltic at the end of the Seventies cut the catch of the GDR high seas fishing fleet by 41.4% in the period 1975-78. One consequence was the further intensification of pond fisheries. The average annual production from freshwater fishing was 15,340 t over the period 1971-75, rising to 18,775 t in 1977, then falling

back and rising to a new height in 1982. See the entry 'Fischwirtschaft' in *DDR Handbuch*, edited by Bundesministerium für innerdeutsche Beziehungen (Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1985), pp. 413-17.

35. Heathcote Williams, *Whale Nation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1988).

36. Schuhmann, 'Lageberichte ...', p. 35.

37. Czechowski, 'Im Allgemeinen', *Mein Venedig*, pp. 84-

85. This poem includes the lines:

Ein grünes Gedicht - wer
Schrieb es nicht gern?
Man sollte vielleicht
Wieder Mörike lesen oder,
Wie Eich, dem Gesang
Der Frösche
Von Ornbau lauschen,
Wenn es dazu
Nicht schon zu spät wär ...

38. Compare the treatment of contaminated Elbe fish in Czechowski's poem 'Diät', *Was mich betrifft*, p. 75.

39. Kirsten, 'dorf', *der bleibaum*, pp. 66-67; 'das haus im acker', *die erde bei Meissen*, pp. 106-08.

40. Eberhard Haufe, afterword to *die erde bei Meissen*, pp. 117-32 (p. 126).

41. Kirsten, 'schiefergebirge', *die erde bei Meißen*, p. 89.
42. Peter Huchel, 'Das Zeichen', *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. I, pp. 113-14. Originally published in *Chausseen*, *Chausseen* (1963).
43. Günter Eich, 'Ende eines Sommers', *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. I, *Die Gedichte, Die Maulwürfe*, edited by Eberhard Haufe (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), p. 79. Originally published in *Botschaften des Regens* (1955).
44. Joachim Walther, 'Oben hinaus und nirgends an', in *Windvogelviereck: Schriftsteller über Wissenschaften und Wissenschaftler*, edited by John Erpenbeck (Berlin: Der Morgen, 1987), pp. 144-66. This monologue is adapted from Walther's radio play 'Lautlos und dennoch eine Stimme sagenhaft', *Doppelkopf: Hörspiele* (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1985), pp. 137-62.
45. Peter Wensierski, *Ökologische Probleme und Kritik an der Industriegesellschaft in der DDR heute* (Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1988), p. 188.
46. Bertolt Brecht, 'Herr K. und die Natur', *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. XII, *Prosa 2*, edited by Elisabeth Hauptmann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), pp. 381-82.
47. See Jürgen Haupt, *Natur und Lyrik: Naturbeziehungen*

im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1983), pp. 142-43.

48. An early example of this is Kito Lorenc's poem 'Die Struga', *Wortland: Gedichte* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1984), pp. 9-10. Originally published in *Struga - Bilder einer Landschaft* (Bautzen: Domowina, 1967). A late example is Heinz Czechowski's 'Kritisches Bewußtsein', *Kein näheres Zeichen* (1987), p. 58.
49. Peter Huchel, 'Die Begrüßung', 'Unkraut', *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. I, pp. 223-25. Originally published in *Gezählte Tage* (1972).
50. Jens Gerlach, 'zeitenwandel', *Der See: Gedichte* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1974), pp. 13-14.
51. Schulze writes of 'dieses ganze unnütze Gewucher', which however protects against wind erosion, in the poem 'Nachrede zur Flurbereinigung'. In 'Das Benzinwerk', a 'Meisterwerk deutscher Technik und Schnelligkeit' has been overgrown by plants. Axel Schulze, *Vogelbilder: Gedichte* (Halle-Leipzig: mdv, 1985), pp. 9, 22 respectively.
52. Haupt, *Natur und Lyrik*, p. 202. My analysis of 'Natur II' is partially based on Haupt's comments on Kunert's poetry, pp. 201-03.
53. Haupt, *Natur und Lyrik*, p. 202.
54. Haupt, *Natur und Lyrik*, p. 202.
55. For a fuller study of this technique see Jürgen Engler, 'Widerspiel' (a 'Lesart' of Pietraß's poem

- 'Lauffeuer', *Spielball*, p. 21), *ndl*, 37 (1989) 11, pp. 133-36.
56. Pietraß, untitled photograph, *Spielball*, p. 19.
 57. Kirsten, 'feldzug', *die erde bei Meißen*, p. 17.
 58. See for example Kirsten's poem 'die erde bei Meißen', *die erde bei Meißen*, pp. 8-9, originally published in *satzanfang: gedichte* (Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau, 1970), and Kirsten's 'Nachbemerkung' to his anthology of GDR landscape poetry, *Veränderte Landschaft: Gedichte*, edited by Wulf Kirsten (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1979), pp. 106-10.
 59. Brecht, 'Der Rauch', *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. X, *Gedichte 3*, p. 1012.
 60. The locations of these Kirsten poems in *die erde bei Meißen* are: 'sieben sätze über meine dörfer', pp. 9-11; 'Kyleb', pp. 16-17; 'dorfstraße', pp. 33-34; 'werktätig', p. 73; 'schmiede', pp. 79-80; 'begegnung mit einem alten bauern', pp. 78-79; 'das haus im acker', pp. 106-08. Erwin Strittmatter, 'Kraftstrom', *Ein Dienstag im September: 16 Romane im Stenogramm* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1977), pp. 75-89 (originally published 1969). Jurij Brezan, *Bild des Vaters: Roman* (Berlin: Neues Leben, 1982).
 61. Wolfgang Ertl, *Natur und Landschaft in der Lyrik der DDR: Walter Werner, Wulf Kirsten und Uwe Greßmann*, *Stuttgarter Arbeiten zur Germanistik*, 109 (Stutt-

gart: Akademischer Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1982),
p. 70.

62. Schuhmann, 'Lageberichte ...', p. 36.

63. From 'lebensspuren' (written 1982):

weit hinten versinken im dämmerlicht
die niemandsgehöfte heimatlichen dorfs.
das nichts hat gestalt angenommen,
wo keiner mehr die nesseln mäht.

And from 'das haus im acker' (written 1982):

die heimat verödet zum allerweltsbezirk
und niemandsland.

Kirsten, *die erde bei Meissen*, pp. 106, 106-08 (p. 108) respectively.

64. Czechowski, 'Nahe Wettin', 'Abendblatt', 'W.', *Was mich betrifft*, pp. 11, 14-15, 22-23, respectively.

65. Ursula Heukenkamp, 'Interview mit Heinz Czechowski', *WB*, 34 (1988) 5, pp. 808-24 (p. 814).

66. Volker Braun, 'Landwüst', 'Hanß Georg Braun u.a.', 'Durchgearbeitete Landschaft', *Gegen die symmetrische Welt: Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), pp. 29-30, 31-32, 34-35 respectively.

67. In the poems 'Der Teutoburger Wald', 'Das Forum' and 'Machu Picchu', Braun himself later adopted a

cyclical view of history and the rise and fall of civilisations, if only as a warning of the possible fate of the present GDR. *Training des aufrechten Gangs: Gedichte* (1979), pp. 26-27, 28-29, 32-33 respectively.

68. Braun's own poem 'Burghammer' is a still harsher reassessment of the views expressed in 'Durchgearbeitete Landschaft'. 'Material V: Burghammer', *Langsamer knirschender Morgen* (1987), pp. 33-36.
69. Czechowski, notes to *Was mich betrifft*, p. 91.
70. Lorenc, 'Aber wenn ihr weint', *Wortland*, pp. 23-26 (p. 26).
71. Lorenc, 'Versuch über uns', *Wortland*, pp. 33-36 (p. 35).
72. Marieluise de Waijer-Wilker, 'Fünf Fragen an Kito Lorenc' (dated Easter 1983), in *Wortland*, pp. 155-67 (p. 164).
73. The poem is dedicated to the inhabitants of Tzschelln. Lorenc, notes to *Wortland*, p. 148.
74. Lorenc, notes to *Wortland*, p. 148.
75. The dying man responds to the sound of the traditional Sorbian 'Regenzauberlied' (see the notes to *Wortland*, p. 148) and sees the world 'wie gemalt/ auf ein Raseneisenerz' (the mineral limonite, formerly used as a source of iron).
76. Approx. 1400-400 BC, when the dead were cremated and

interred in large burial grounds ('urnfields'). Lutz Heydick, Günther Hoppe and Jürgen John, editors, *Historischer Führer: Stätten und Denkmäler der Geschichte in den Bezirken Dresden, Cottbus*, second, revised edition (Leipzig, Jena, Berlin: Urania, 1988), p. 14. The 'Seelenloch' in the urn is a hole to allow the soul to escape. Lorenc, notes to *Wortland*, p. 148.

77. See Wolfgang Ertl, 'Sintflut und Apokalypse: Überlegungen zur Umweltlyrik in der DDR und BRD', in *GDR: Individual and Society*, edited by Ingrid K. Williams (Ealing: Ealing College of HE, 1987), pp. 79-90; Ursula Heukenkamp, 'Das Zeichen ZUKUNFT', in *DDR-Lyrik im Kontext*, *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik*, 26, edited by Christine Cosentino, Wolfgang Ertl and Gerd Labrousse (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988), pp. 39-59; J.H. Reid, 'En Route to Utopia: Some Visions of the Future in East German Literature', *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, vol. 27 (1984), pp. 114-28.
78. See Ertl, 'Sintflut und Apokalypse', for examples of end-of-the-world motifs in East and West German environmental poetry. Michael Schneider criticises the apocalyptic mood in West German culture as a fashionable trend, the consequence of a loss of confidence in established (bourgeois) values, in *Nur tote Fische schwimmen mit dem Strom: Essays*,

Aphorismen und Polemiken (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1984).

79. Günter Kunert, 'Laika', *Erinnerung an einen Planeten: Gedichte aus fünfzehn Jahren* (Munich: Hanser, 1963), p. 60. Stephan Hermlin, 'Die Vögel und der Test', in *Die eigene Stimme*, p. 89. Rainer Kirsch, 'Gespräch mit dem Saurier', in *Gespräch mit dem Saurier: Gedichte*, Sarah and Rainer Kirsch (Berlin: Neues Leben, 1965), pp. 43-44.
80. Kunert, 'Nature Morte', *Stilleben: Gedichte* (Munich and Vienna: Hanser, 1983), p. 22.
81. Jens Gerlach, 'kriegserklärung', *Der See: Gedichte* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1974), p. 15.
82. Ach, Spatzen sind klüger als du.
Sie picken Körner, nähren sich
Noch auf rußigen Bahnsteigen -
Sie überlebten.
Vergangen bist du, paläozoischer Fleischberg,
[...]

Rainer Kirsch, 'Gespräch mit dem Saurier', *Gespräch mit dem Saurier*, p. 43.

83. Hans-Magnus Enzensberger, 'weiterung', *blinden-schrift: gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1964), p. 50. Wolfgang Hilbig, 'das meer in sachsen', *abwesenheit: gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main:

S. Fischer, 1979), pp. 79-83.

84. Seen, for example, in the lines:

Ihr, die ihr auftauchen werdet aus der Flut
In der wir untergegangen sind
Gedenkt
Wenn ihr von unseren Schwächen sprecht
Auch der finsternen Zeit
Der ihr entronnen seid.

Brecht, 'An die Nachgeborenen', *Gesammelte Werke*,
vol. IX, *Gedichte 2*, pp. 722-25 (p. 724).
Enzensberger's 'weiterung' similarly challenges the
optimism of this poem, using direct allusions. The
connection between 'Die Vögel' and 'An die
Nachgeborenen' is pointed out by Kunert in the
passage to which the following note refers.

85. Kunert, *Vor der Sintflut: Das Gedicht als Arche
Noah: Frankfurter Vorlesungen* (Munich and Vienna:
Hanser, 1985), p. 99.

86. See Marieluise de Waijer-Wilke, 'The *Warngedicht* in
the work of Günter Kunert: its reception as
political poetry', *GDR Monitor*, no. 14 (Winter 1985/
86), pp. 14-27.

87. Kunert, *Abtötungsverfahren: Gedichte* (Munich and
Vienna: Hanser, 1980), p. 67.

88. Pietraß, 'Vom Vergehen der Arten', pp. 130-32, 142.

See also pp. 118-19 above.

89. The title of the poem 'Wir' further recalls the Soviet writer Yevgeny Zamyatin's dystopian novel *We* (written 1920), which is set in a totally regulated future society hermetically sealed from the surrounding wilderness. Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*, translated by Bernard Guilbert Guerney (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972).
90. Such images are still used by Czechowski in a more specific way in some poems contemporaneous with 'Wir', e.g. in the later part of 'Credo'. Czechowski's disillusionment, expressed in this poem, with his generation's former hopes for the socialist future is very likely a reason for his pessimistic outlook in environmental poems like 'Die Vögel' and 'Wir'. Czechowski, 'Credo', *Kein näheres Zeichen*, pp. 133-34.
91. Pietraß, 'Die Schattenalge', *Spielball*, p. 9.
92. E.g. 'Hackreihe' and 'Kopf Schwanz' on the biological determination of human behaviour, 'L'art pour l'art' on the animal instinct against killing one's own kind. Pietraß, *Spielball*, pp. 33, 96, 32 respectively.
93. One passage in the essay envisages a worst-case scenario rather like those in the Czechowski poems: 'Der Gedanke an eine Erde, auf welcher der Mensch

mit seinen wenigen Nutzpflanzen, Nutztieren und einigen unausrottbaren Parasiten und Krankheitserregern allein sein wird, ist mir eine Schreckensvorstellung.' Pietraß, 'Vom Vergehen der Arten' p. 132.

94. In the poem 'Apolda! Apolda!' a dead buzzard lies on the railway tracks; in 'Blutzoll' a mole is killed by a car. Pietraß, *Spielball*, pp. 83, 94 respectively.
95. Schuhmann, 'Lageberichte ...', p. 41.
96. Ursula Heukenkamp, 'Wulf Kirsten: Der Bleibaum', *WB*, 24 (1978) 1, pp. 131-37. Jürgen Engler, 'Fortschritt und Rückblick', *ndl*, 25 (1977) 8, pp. 139-44.
97. Klaus Schuhmann, 'Lageberichte zur ökologischen Situation - Beobachtungen zur Lyrik der achtziger Jahre', in *DDR-Literatur '85 im Gespräch*, edited by Siegfried Rönisch (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1986), pp. 23-43 (p. 35).
98. Wolfgang Ertl, *Natur und Landschaft in der Lyrik der DDR: Walter Werner, Wulf Kirsten und Uwe Greßmann*, *Stuttgarter Arbeiten zur Germanistik*, 109 (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1982), p. 70.
99. Heinz Czechowski, 'Lesarten: Gegen den Strich', *ndl*, 32 (1984) 12, pp. 84-88.
100. Bernd Leistner, 'Laudatio: Johannes-R.-Becher-Preis

1985', *ndl*, 33 (1985) 9, pp. 162-69 (p. 166).

101. Bernd Heimberger, 'Lyrische Ortsbeschreibung und Erkundung der Welt', *Tribüne*, 5 September 1986, p. 13. This review was published again in a slightly abridged and altered version under the title 'Worte wie grünende Saaten', *Neue Zeit*, 6 April 1987, p. 4. An example of a similar review is Eckhard Bahr, 'Vom herben Klang', *National-Zeitung*, 19 December 1988, p. 7.
102. Eberhard Haufe, Nachwort, in *die erde bei Meißen: gedichte*, Wulf Kirsten (Leipzig: Reclam, 1986), pp. 117-32.
103. Heinz Czechowski, 'Annäherung an Wulf Kirsten', *SuF*, 41 (1989) 5, pp. 1044-53 (esp. pp. 1051-53). This is the text of the 'Laudatio' given by Czechowski when Kirsten received the Heinrich Mann Prize in April 1989.
104. See Mallinckrodt, *The Environmental Dialogue in the GDR*, pp. 135-39, 143-44.
105. Ursula Heukenkamp, 'Heinz Czechowski: Was mich betrifft', *WB*, 29 (1983) 6, pp. 1096-1108.
106. Czechowski, 'Abendblatt', 'Diät', 'Landschaftsschutzgebiet', *Was mich betrifft*, pp. 14-15, 74-75, 76-77 respectively.
107. Schuhmann, 'Lageberichte ...', pp. 36-38.
108. Christel and Walfried Hartinger, 'Heinz Czechowski',

in *Literatur der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik: Einzeldarstellungen*, edited by Hans Jürgen Geerds and Hannelore Prosche (Berlin: Volk und Wissen, 1987), vol. III, pp. 15-38 (pp. 16-18; see also pp. 28-29).

109. Czechowski, 'Kritisches Bewußtsein', 'Wir', 'Spaziergang', *Kein näheres Zeichen*, pp. 58, 135, 159 respectively.
110. Bernd Leistner, 'Wider das Gespenst der Vergeblichkeit: Czechowskis Gedichtband "Kein näheres Zeichen"', in *DDR-Literatur '87 im Gespräch*, edited by Siegfried Rönisch (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1988), pp. 197-204. Other politically 'safe' reviews in this respect are: Eckhard Bahr, 'Diese Dichtung macht Mut: Zu Versen von Heinz Czechowski und Hildegard Jahn-Reinke', *National-Zeitung*, 25 April 1988, p. 7; Gerhard Rothbauer, 'Widerspiel gegen das Nichts', *ndI*, 36 (1988) 8, pp. 154-59; Hannes Würtz, 'Sachsen im Herzen: Heinz Czechowskis neuer Gedichtband bringt Weltsicht ein', *Junge Welt*, 16 February 1988, p. 10.
111. Andreas Lehmann, 'Klirrende Fahnen: Eindringliche Gedichte von Heinz Czechowski', *Tribüne*, 13 May 1988, p. 13.
112. Ursula Heukenkamp, 'Unsere Sprache ist vielleicht nicht die eigentliche: Der Lyriker Heinz Czechowski', *WB*, 34 (1988) 5, pp. 825-40. Another

example of a specific, positive reception of Czechowski's environmental verse is Jürgen Engler's interpretation of the poem 'Spaziergang', 'Lesarten: Gelegenheit und Lebenszeit', *ndl*, 36 (1988) 4, pp. 80-84.

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114. Jürgen Engler, 'Lesarten: Der Reim - nicht am Ende', *ndl*, 31 (1983) 8, pp. 108-113.
115. Schuhmann, 'Lageberichte ...', pp. 38-39.
116. Ursula Heukenkamp, '"Spielball" von Richard Pietraß: Für und Wider', *WB*, 34 (1988) 1, pp. 98-101 (p. 98).
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118. Jürgen Engler, 'Spiel und Botschaft', *ndl*, 35 (1987) 8, pp. 145-48. Barbara Köhler, 'Grenzenloses Spiel: Fragmentarische Bemerkungen zu Richard Pietraß' Gedichtband "Spielball": Aufbau-Verlag', *Sonntag*, 42

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119. Rudolf Dau, John Erpenbeck, Ursula Heukenkamp, Harald Heydrich, Rolf Löther, Harry Riedel, "Spielball" von Richard Pietraß: Für und Wider', *WB*, 34 (1988) 1, pp. 92-111 (Dau, pp. 92-94; Riedel, pp. 107-11). Bernd Leistner, 'Noch einmal zu "Spielball"', *WB*, 34 (1988) 7, pp. 1214-16.
120. Here I am also counting Jürgen Engler's interpretation of Pietraß's poem 'Lauffeuer', 'Lesarten: Widerspiel', *ndl*, 37 (1989) 11, pp. 133-36.
121. Compare Harry Riedel's article on *Spielball*, *WB*, 34 (1988) 1, pp. 107-11, with Marianne Krumrey's review of *Die Totenkeule*, 'Aufbruch der "dürren Ziege"', *ndl*, 37 (1989) 6, pp. 137-40. Krumrey's article is quoted in chapter 3, section 9 of this thesis.
122. Schuhmann, 'Lageberichte ...', pp. 41, 34 respectively. The second quotation does not expressly refer to the 'majority' of East German environmental poems, but both quotations are clearly describing the same class of poems.

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